

Blaby Local Plan Review Sustainability Appraisal

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Report

Blaby District Council

June, 2026

Quality information

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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 AECOM has been commissioned by Blaby District Council to undertake a sustainability appraisal (SA) in support of the Local Plan Review (the 'Plan'), which will cover the period 2025 – 2042.

1.1.2 Sustainability Appraisal is a tool for exploring the effects of a plan in terms of the environment, economy and community wellbeing.

1.1.3 This is the Sustainability Appraisal Report for the Blaby Local Plan Review. At this stage, the focus is on understanding the effects of the draft Plan (and any reasonable alternatives). The report also documents the findings from earlier stages in the SA process.

1.1.4 Blaby has determined it necessary to undertake a Plan Review primarily for the following reasons:

- To ensure that the Local Plan is up to date and looks ahead at least 15 years.
- To take account of new circumstances, such as updated population and household projections.
- The need to take account of and plan for the wider issues across the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area.
- To take account of the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan (and associated Statements of Common Ground).
- To take account of revised national planning policy.

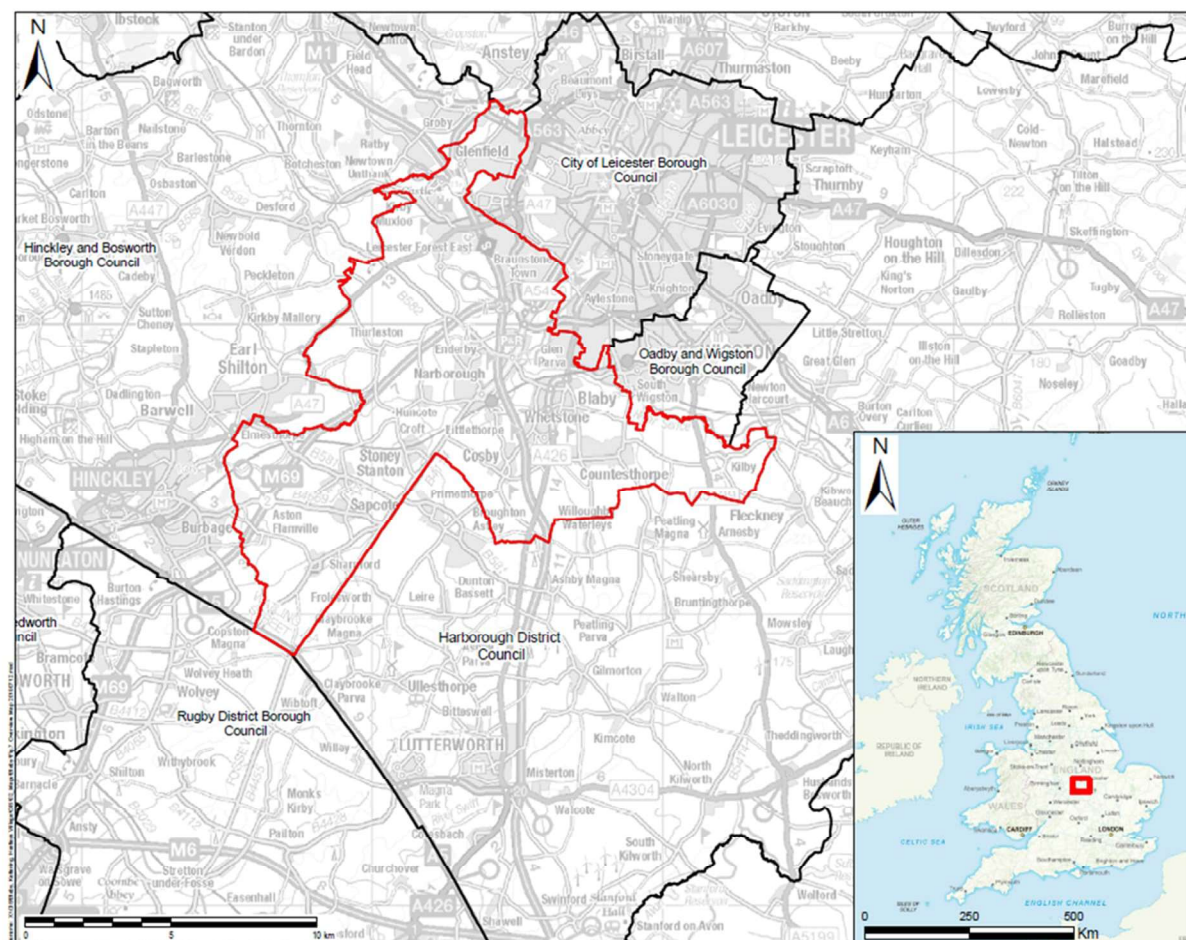
1.1.5 The Sustainability Appraisal Report contains the findings associated with the SA work that has been undertaken so far, specifically;

- A summary of the SA scope and methodologies.
- Appraisal of strategic objectives
- Consideration and appraisal of alternative approaches to the key issues of housing and employment growth and distribution.
- Appraisal of site-specific options.
- Appraisal of the draft Plan considered 'as a whole'.
- Consideration of mitigation and enhancement measures.

1.2 Location plan

- 1.2.1 The area covered by the new Local Plan is illustrated on Figure 1.1. The map highlights Blaby District's close proximity to the built up south western boundary of the City of Leicester.

Figure 1.1: The new Local Plan area



2. Scoping Summary

2.1 Introduction

- 2.1.1 The Scoping stage of the SA process is used to establish the key issues that should be the focus of the appraisal, as well as the assessment methodologies.
- 2.1.2 A Scoping Report was prepared and published for consultation with the Statutory Bodies in November 2019. These are; Natural England, Historic England, and the Environment Agency.
- 2.1.3 Following consideration of the comments received, the scope of the SA was established and has provided the baseline position against which appraisals have been undertaken.
- 2.1.4 It should be noted that the scope of the SA is fluid and has been updated throughout the plan making process in light of new evidence. Given the lengthy plan-making process, it was considered helpful to prepare a scoping report update before undertaking the final Sustainability Assessment. The report focused on any new evidence and policy context and explored whether this would have any implications for the key issues and SA framework. The focused update report was sent to the statutory consultees for a five-week period to invite further comment.

2.2 Key issues and objectives

- 2.2.1 The key issues identified through the scoping process are summarised in table 2.1 below. This reflects any changes to the key issues that were made as a result of the scoping update.
- 2.2.2 The key issues were used to determine appropriate objectives which have been used to assess the plan (i.e. by establishing the key issues that need to be addressed through the SA process).
- 2.2.3 The SA Framework forms a basis for the appraisal of all elements of the Plan, and any reasonable alternatives. Essentially, the SA seeks to determine how the Plan performs in relation to each of the SA Objectives and whether the proposals would lead to a significant effect on the baseline position associated with each SA Objective.

Table 2.1: Key sustainability issues identified through scoping and associated sustainability appraisal objectives

Topic	Key Issues	SA Objectives	Prompts
Population and housing	The population is increasing and ageing; which requires specific housing solutions.	1. Provide a suitable level of housing to meet overall need within the district; and a range of housing types to meet the needs of different groups.	Will the needs of specific groups be catered for including the elderly, young, low income, gypsies and travellers?
	The number of households is increasing and is projected to continue to increase.		Will the right mix of homes be delivered?
	The percentage of households owning their own home is decreasing.		Will homes be high quality, adaptable and accessible?
	Average house prices are increasing and the ratio of house price to earnings is increasing.		Will there be a sufficient amount of affordable homes that are unrecognisable from market homes?
	The number of dwellings classed as long-term empty homes is increasing. The Blaby Local Plan should aim to reduce the number of empty homes by ensuring housing is affordable and accessible for everyone.		
	The provision of housing delivery, especially affordable housing, has fallen in recent years. The Local Plan should address this by promoting the construction of affordable housing units and ensure a diverse mix of housing types that cater to the needs of the growing and ageing population.		

Topic	Key Issues	SA Objectives	Prompts
Health and well-being	The local plan should provide the opportunity to coordinate growth with the delivery of social infrastructure, such as health services to support an aging population. Development should be located so that health, education and community facilities are easily accessible. This includes green space, public open space, primary and secondary schools, general health practitioners and community facilities that promote health and well-being. The ageing population profile within Blaby may also generate changing demands for additional sports and recreation facilities. Ensuring adequate healthcare facilities exist in accessible locations is clearly a key sustainability issue.	2. Ensure that all groups within the community have good access to high quality local services (including schools, GP practices and open space).	Will new development be located in areas that have capacity (or can be expanded) in schools and health care to accommodate growth? Will people have good access to natural green space, play spaces, leisure and other forms of recreational space? Will there be good access to services for all members of the community?
<i>Health and physical activity</i>	There is also increasing interest in the role of the planning system in promoting other aspects of health, for example, through the location and distribution of hot food takeaways, and ensuring that new neighbourhoods are conducive to cycling and walking (whether it be through the provision of infrastructure or the nature of the development).	3. Support good health and wellbeing for all residents and focus on reducing inequalities.	Will places be made safe and encourage social interaction? How will the wellbeing of communities be affected by amenity issues such as noise, light, pollution and loss of recreational land? Will health inequalities be reduced?
<i>Crime</i>			
<i>Pollution / amenity</i>	The local plan should focus on reducing health inequities by ensuring that new developments incorporate health-promoting features and are situated in areas that can bridge the health gap between more and less deprived areas.		Will development be located and designed to encourage active travel?

Topic	Key Issues	SA Objectives	Prompts
	With Blaby residents reporting better health outcomes compared to regional and national levels, the local plan should prioritise maintaining and improving these outcomes. This includes enhancing the availability and quality of local health services and facilities and promoting environments conducive to physical activity and healthy lifestyles. <u>Community safety</u> Given the lower crime rates in Blaby compared to other areas in the Leicestershire force area, the local plan should continue to promote safe and cohesive communities. This includes designing out crime in new developments and maintaining effective community safety measures. <u>Amenity issues</u> The impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation needs to be limited and reduced. The trunk road network and railway line are a source of noise pollution. Noise within tranquil areas within the region should be monitored and reduced where possible, to avoid the effects of noise pollution. The major hazards at Calor Gas and High Pressure Gas Pipeline are constraints.		

Topic	Key Issues	SA Objectives	Prompts
Biodiversity and Geodiversity	The concept of net-biodiversity gain is very important and will need to be ensured in future development.		
	Development ought to be located in areas that cause the least harm and provide opportunities to strengthen strategic ecological networks.		
	It is important to identify, protect and improve the wider ecological network		How likely is it that net gain can be achieved on or nearby to development locations?
	Green infrastructure can contribute to biodiversity and geodiversity aims and should be supported within the Local Plan.	4. Direct growth away from the most sensitive wildlife habitats, whilst ensuring that ecological networks are strengthened and there is a net gain in biodiversity.	Will effects upon sensitive biodiversity be avoided and mitigated before considering compensation?
	The District has a number of important geological sites some of which have the potential for recreational activity.		Will ecological networks be protected and enhanced (in terms of quality and extent)?
	A key focus for Blaby is to protect and enhance priority habitats, semi-natural habitats and green space.		Is development likely to put recreational pressure upon biodiversity and geodiversity? If so, how can this be managed?
	There is only a small number/area of nationally important biodiversity sites (SSSIs) within Blaby. Approximately half of these are in favourable condition. It is important to protect these and improve their condition, where needed. There is also a decline in the condition of Croft Pasture and Narborough Bog SSSIs highlights the need for immediate and effective land management strategies to address scrub encroachment and water level changes.		

Topic	Key Issues	SA Objectives	Prompts
Cultural heritage	Protect and enhance the District's designated and non-designated heritage assets and the wider historic built and natural environment features.		How will heritage assets and their settings be affected?
	Maintain the current status of there being no heritage assets 'at risk'.		How will locally important buildings and other features be affected?
	Maintain the local character and distinctiveness of the District's towns and villages, taking account of historic and cultural assets and their setting.	5. Conserve and enhance the historic and cultural environment; whilst making it more accessible for public enjoyment.	Will local people be able to interact with historic and cultural features more easily?
	Heritage assets are irreplaceable and should be conserved and where possible enhanced.		Will archaeological features be recorded and where possible retained?
	Development should strive to make a positive contribution to local character, distinctiveness and sense of place. Heritage assets should be promoted as tourism opportunities and made accessible for the enjoyment of the public.		Will development ensure that no harm or loss of significant designated heritage assets are made unless can be proven to achieve substantial public benefits?
Minerals	It is essential that there is a sufficient supply of minerals to provide the infrastructure, buildings, energy and goods that are needed. Minerals are a finite natural resource and can only be worked where they are found. Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) should not normally permit other development proposals in Mineral Safeguarding Areas if it might constrain potential future use for viable mineral working.	6. Protect mineral resources and associated infrastructure from sterilisation; whilst ensuring the efficient extraction and use of mineral resources.	Will development occur in areas identified as potentially containing mineral resources? If so, is it likely that resources would be sterilised? (could they be extracted prior to use, or would resource extraction be unviable anyway?) Will a sufficient supply of historic building materials be available?

Topic	Key Issues	SA Objectives	Prompts
Waste	There are important mineral resources in the District that should be protected and utilised efficiently. An important issue is the long term future of Croft Quarry.		
	The amount of waste sent to landfill has increased slightly and this trend needs to be reversed. Therefore, the plan should aim to encourage measures to prevent, reuse, recycle and reduce waste to landfill in line with the waste hierarchy. Impacts of pollution should be considered on health and quality of life when planning for development. There needs to be consideration for the need for waste management facilities alongside other spatial planning concerns. Waste minimisation measures should be continued in terms of design and construction of new development.	7. Minimise waste generation whilst supporting an increase in reuse, recycling and composting.	How will it affect the ability to secure adequate waste management facilities (and supporting infrastructure). Will it support the effective storage and collection of waste and recycling materials?
	No national landscape designations but need to protect local landscape and settlement characteristics including Croft Hill. Potential for loss of best and most versatile agricultural land. There are a limited brownfield options for development. Pressure for development will mean loss of countryside and impact on landscape and settlement character. Potential for land contamination on sites but opportunity to remediate such land.	8. Protect landscape and townscape character and distinctiveness throughout the district 9. To conserve the District's soils and make efficient and effective use of land.	Will development occur in locations that are more sensitive to landscape change? Is there potential to mitigate effects on landscape and incorporate green infrastructure enhancements? Will there be a loss of Grade 3a land? If so, are there suitable alternative sites / locations that are Grade 3b or preferably non-agricultural / brownfield land?

Topic	Key Issues	SA Objectives	Prompts
Environmental Protection	Water quality Protecting and enhancing the quality of watercourses is key environmental objective that the Planning system plays an important role in. The overall classification of watercourses in the District is either poor or moderate. The main threats to water quality are agricultural practices, rural land management, water treatment and discharge and urban run-off from transport. As there are increases in population, there may be requirements to ensure expansions / upgrading of current sewerage are in place. Water resources are not freely available, so there will be a need to understand and manage demand from new development.	10. Improve the water quality status of the watercourses running through the district; seeking to achieve 'good' overall status for WFD classification.	What are the risks of pollution and sedimentation? Is there sufficient headroom at waste water treatment plants to accommodate new development? Will land use changes lead to an increase or decrease in pollutant run off? (For example, agricultural land practices and urban run-off from transportation). Will recreational pressures have an effect upon watercourses?
	Air quality The status of AQMAs in the District has changed, with the revocation of 3 AQMAs due to improved air quality over the past five years. However, a new AQMA has been designated in Braunstone Town due to exceedance of NO2 levels. There is a need to maintain the improvements in the revoked AQMAs and implement targeted measures in the new AQMA.	11. Reduce emissions of pollutants that contribute to poor air quality (particularly from traffic); whilst ensuring that new and existing	Will there be an increase in car trips and congestion that could exacerbate poor air quality within the district (particularly within AQMAs)? Will new communities be created in areas that are susceptible to poor air quality?

Topic	Key Issues	SA Objectives	Prompts
	Concentrations of pollutants are generally decreasing with the exception of Mill Hill, Enderby (the most recently declared AQMA). Identification of opportunities to improve air quality or mitigate impacts can include energy, heat, industry, energy efficiency and sustainable transport. Clean Air Zones should be considered when planning for better air quality within the region. Croft Quarry is a source of PM2.5 pollutants due to dust.	communities (and environmental assets) are protected from the harmful effects that poor air quality causes.	What measures will be taken to ensure that communities are less exposed to poor air quality?
Climate change (flooding)	A number of the District's main settlements are at high risk of surface water flooding and fluvial flooding. Development should take place away from flood risk zones.	12. Ensure that existing and new development is resilient to the effects of climate change, particularly flood risk and other extreme weather events.	Will new development be located in areas of lower flood risk? (<i>Especially when there are suitable alternatives</i>). How will surface water run-off and drainage be affected? How will wider resilience to climate change impacts be affected? Will green and blue infrastructure networks be strengthened to help address overheating, flooding and pressures on biodiversity?

Topic	Key Issues	SA Objectives	Prompts
Climate change (mitigation)	The NPPF and other important policy documents promote a radical move towards a low carbon future by reducing the level of greenhouse gas emissions. While the overall CO2 emissions for the Blaby district are lower than both regional and national levels – these have been decreasing at a lower rate. The District has an above average reading of CO2 emissions per capita, in particular road transport CO2 and carbon energy. The local plan should prioritize initiatives that align with national strategies such as the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2022 and the Net Zero Strategy, focusing on enhancing energy efficiency, promoting sustainable transport options, and integrating climate resilience measures into planning and development frameworks to mitigate climate risks effectively.	13. Support the move to a zero carbon economy.	Will opportunities to achieve higher standards of resource efficiency in new development be taken? Would it support a reduction in greenhouse gases? Will it support carbon sequestration?
Economy and employment <i>Economy</i> <i>Deprivation</i>	Currently in Blaby, the local economy is relatively healthy, and people are economically active. However, there is a need to ensure that the right types of land are provided to support emerging employment sectors. The retail landscape is changing, and the industry is experiencing changes in trends particularly changes that are influenced by technology. This is having significant impacts upon the role of town centres. Promoting Blaby District as a visitor destination is a local aspiration. The Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange is a potential major source of employment. Similarly, there	14. Support the sustainable growth of Blaby's economy to ensure that a suitable range of employment opportunities are available to all and financial resilience is strengthened.	Will residents be able to benefit from increased access to jobs (including higher quality jobs)? Will a range of employment spaces be created to support different sectors and scales of business? Will large scale distribution units be accessible by public transport and adopt exemplary design? How will Blaby's attractiveness as a place to visit and do work be affected?

Topic	Key Issues	SA Objectives	Prompts
	is likely to be Growth at Fosse Park/Motorways Retail Area. The population of Blaby District overall is in good health, and almost all areas in Blaby fall within areas of low deprivation. Nevertheless, there are some areas such as parts of Narborough and Countesthorpe, Thorpe Astley and Kirkby Muxloe that are less deprived than others, and the policy context suggests that Council's should continue to 'close the gap' between different areas. Furthermore, there are high levels of deprivation in the City of Leicester, and development within Blaby could potentially have effects on these areas in terms of housing provision and employment. Nearby communities may also benefit from access to services within Blaby, so improvements (or a decline) in services could have wider consequences. Key objectives for Blaby District are to maintain a strong and sustainable local economy, provide access to employment and training opportunities, improve digital inclusivity and take advantage of opportunities in growth sectors such as the low carbon economy.		How will town and district centres be affected? How will communities that suffer from greater levels of deprivation be affected (for example in adjacent neighbourhoods within Leicester)? Will digital infrastructure be enhanced and inclusive? Will low carbon and environmental sectors be supported?

Topic	Key Issues	SA Objectives	Prompts
Accessibility	Many junctions on the main radial routes into Leicester are at capacity. Growth is resulting in annual increases in vehicles using the transport network and this trend is likely to continue with an increase in car ownership.		Will technological enhancements be supported that reduce the need to travel such as super-fast broadband?
	There is a need to ensure that new development is supported by adequate road infrastructure to reduce pressure on the existing network. However, at the same time, there is a national and local policy imperative to support modal shift to more sustainable modes of transport. This will be difficult to achieve given that strategic locations for growth are broadly served from a congested network.		Will ways of working be supported that reduce the need to travel such as live/work units?
	With regards to long term growth, new strategic road infrastructure will be a critical, but it is important to ensure that this helps to reduce pressure on junctions and supports increased public transport usage.	15. . Provide infrastructure to support economic growth, whilst prioritising sustainable modes of transport and reducing the need to travel.	Will new employment and housing be closely matched to ensure that the need to travel is reduced and that sustainable modes of transport are a realistic option?
	Timely delivery of transport infrastructure is essential to support growth, to make development acceptable and the cost of transport infrastructure needs to be considered to ensure viability.		Will public transport networks be strengthened?
	There is a need to promote and enable the uptake of technologies and economic practices that reduce the need to travel and make personal travel easier.		Will infrastructure improvements be secured that allow for cleaner vehicles?
	There is a need to support improved access to local services by walking and wheeling.		Will an enhanced network of walking and cycling routes be created?
			Will freight movement be diversified? Will congestion be reduced?

3. Plan Vision and Objectives

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 This section of the SA Report sets out a comparison of the draft Local Plan Objectives and the SA Objectives. The purpose of this task is to ensure that SA Objectives and the Plan are broadly compatible and that the Plan will achieve sustainable development.
- 3.1.2 Where objectives are found to be potentially incompatible, it is possible to make suggestions as to the measures that could be taken to ensure that the Plan achieves an appropriate balance between economic, social and environmental factors. A comparison of objectives was undertaken at an early stage of plan-making to provide feedback prior to the Plan objectives being finalised. The finalised Plan Objectives (alongside an updated compatibility exercise) are presented in section 3.6.

3.2 The Plan Objectives

- 3.2.1 The draft Plan objectives (as articulated at Issues and Options stage in 2019 and the 'Options' stage in 2021) are set out below, followed by a discussion of how these related to the SA Objectives.

Social

- SO1: To direct new growth to the most sustainable locations. New homes and businesses will be well located, of high-quality design and co-located with a compact mix of uses accessible by walking, cycling and public transport.
- SO2: To create and sustain strong, active, healthy and inclusive communities where there is easy access by walking and cycling to shops, schools, health care services, open space, sports, leisure and community facilities and employment opportunities.
- SO3: To provide a suitable level of housing to meet overall need within the district and the wider Housing Market Area. To provide a range of housing types, size and tenures to meet the needs of different groups including those with affordable housing needs, older persons and specialist housing needs and sufficient pitches and plots to meet the identified needs for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.

Environment

- SO4: To support the move to a low carbon future and contribute to cutting carbon emissions by embedding consideration of climate change into the local plan.

- SO5: To increase the District's resilience and ability to adapt to a changing climate and the associated risks of flooding and other extreme weather events.
- SO6: To protect new and existing communities from the harmful effects that poor air quality causes, particularly in designated 'Air Quality Management Areas', by seeking to reduce emissions of pollutants that contribute to poor air quality (mainly from traffic).
- SO7: To make efficient use of land, water, minerals, soils, waste and other resources including maximising the use of previously developed land and ensuring that any loss of the best and most versatile land is balanced against development needs.
- SO8: To ensure that the District's most valued natural assets are protected and that biodiversity can thrive within enhanced habitats and natural landscapes.
- SO9: To ensure that our towns, villages and countryside benefit from high quality design for all new developments which result in high quality and safe places to live, work and visit. The local character and distinctiveness of Blaby's towns and villages will be protected and enhanced including townscape, streetscape, architecture, places and spaces.
- SO10: To conserve and enhance the District's many heritage assets and their settings including Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments.

Economy

- SO11: To provide an appropriate quantity, quality and mix of land for employment uses to support a diverse range of business needs and to provide training and job opportunities for current and future populations.
- SO12: To support rural communities through helping to retain existing, and where possible provide new, services and facilities. Where necessary provide new homes and help to create and sustain a vibrant rural economy.
- SO13: To promote and develop tourism and leisure opportunities across the District and in particular promote existing tourist facilities and supporting infrastructure in the District where there is no conflict with environmental and economic objectives.
- SO14: To prioritise the use of sustainable modes of transport to travel to work, services, facilities and leisure. To promote an efficient transport network and mitigate the adverse impacts of growth on congestion, road safety and air quality. To plan strategically for transport and seek improvements to local, regional and national transport networks.

- SO15: To plan for the continued vitality and viability of Blaby town centre and the other District and Local Centres recognising the need to adapt to changing retail patterns and the evolving functions of town centres. To maximise the opportunities offered by Fosse Park without undermining the ability of other centres to function effectively.

3.3 Discussion of compatibility

- 3.3.1 Given the broad nature of high-level Plan objectives, it is difficult to accurately predict 'significant effects', through a comparison of objectives. Therefore, the appraisal at this stage identified whether objectives share a degree of compatibility or not.
- 3.3.2 It is also important to acknowledge that there are inherent synergies and conflicts between certain objectives. The aim is to ensure that measures can be taken to minimise incompatibilities and make the most of synergies.
- 3.3.3 Table 3.1 below sets out a visual summary of the compatibility assessment.

Table 3.1: draft Plan Strategic Objectives (SO) Vs Sustainability Appraisal Objectives (SA)

	SO1	SO2	SO3	SO4	SO5	SO6	SO7	SO8	SO9	SO10	SO11	SO12	SO13	SO14	SO15
Population/Housing			+												
Health and Well-being	+	+													
Biodiversity Geodiversity								+							
Cultural heritage									+	+					
Minerals															
Waste															
Landscape and Soil							+								
Environment Protection						+									
Climate Change (flooding)					+										
Climate Change (mitigation)				+											
Economy	+										+				+
Accessibility	+	+												+	

+	Very compatible		Incompatible
	Compatible	+	Very incompatible
	Uncertain or insufficient information on which to determine		Neutral / No clear link

- 3.3.4 The comparison of the initial objectives revealed that most of the proposed Local Plan objectives would be compatible with the SA Objectives, with some being very compatible. The reasons for this are discussed further below.
- 3.3.5 At this stage, no objectives were found to be incompatible, but there were some uncertainties about the compatibility of draft Plan objectives and SA Objectives.

- 3.3.6 In the main, this related to the Plan and SA objectives potentially being incompatible with one another, and the potential to generate negative effects. However, there is not sufficient evidence to suggest that both objectives could not be achieved in a compatible way.
- 3.3.7 Likewise, some objectives could potentially be compatible, but this depends upon how the objectives are achieved through the Plan strategy.

Objective Compatibility Assessment

- 3.3.8 The 'Social' Plan Objectives that promote housing growth and allocation in sustainable locations (SO1 – SO3) are compatible with a number of SA objectives. This includes the Population and Housing SA Objective, which focusses on providing suitable housing to meet the overall need of housing types within the district. For example, housing types, sizes, tenures, affordable housing and meeting the needs of different groups. The Health and Wellbeing SA Objective is also considered to be very compatible with Plan Objectives (SO1 and SO2) as it promotes active lifestyles including active travel connections to other land uses and facilities. There are very strong links between the Accessibility SA objective and the social objectives too, as there is a clear focus on placing growth in well serviced, walkable or cyclable locations.
- 3.3.9 Though the Housing Objective promotes the growth of housing (which can lead to negative effects on environmental objectives), it is not considered to be incompatible with the SA objectives. Housing can be delivered in a sustainable way, and these issues would be explored through the appraisal of the Plan and any reasonable alternatives. Housing growth is not inherently incompatible with environmental protection and social objectives though.
- 3.3.10 The Plan Objective SO4 to promote a low carbon future is compatible and a reoccurring theme amongst SA Objectives. Several SA Objectives discuss waste management, environmental protection of air quality and water resources, climate change mitigation and low carbon initiatives. This includes minimising waste generation, making efficient use of land and reducing emissions harmful to air quality.
- 3.3.11 Other compatibilities are recorded with regards to air quality, traffic and travel. SO6 is compatible with the accessibility SA Objective as the encouragement of sustainable modes of travel and reduction in the need to travel should be explored. Likewise, increasing the use of sustainable modes of transport also contributes to a low carbon future.
- 3.3.12 The efficient use of land, water, minerals and soils has compatibilities with a number of SA Objectives. Prioritising the use of previously developed land will have impacts in areas regarding agriculture, environmental significance and managing natural resources.

- 3.3.13 The Plan Objectives also set a requirement for sustainable growth. This approach is broadly compatible with most SA Objectives including those that seek to conserve and enhance the built environment (Cultural Heritage and Landscape objectives), promote the transition to a low carbon District, (Climate Change mitigation, Waste, Accessibility and Air Quality objectives) and promote healthy lifestyles (Health and Wellbeing objectives).
- 3.3.14 The Plan Objectives to ensure developments are of a high-quality design standard to result in high quality and safe places to live, work and visit is compatible with SA Objective 'Cultural Heritage' to make public places accessible and enjoyable.
- 3.3.15 A number of Plan Objectives deal with specific issues such as; improving the provision of sustainable transport infrastructure and accessibility (SO15), support the provision of shops and community services and facilities (SO1, SO2, SO11 – 14), and ensuring development is resilient to the associated risks of flooding and other extreme weather (SO5). As would be expected, these are very compatible with SA Objectives that seek to achieve the same outcomes. For example, SA Objective 'Climate Change (Flooding)' has direct links to flood resilience and avoiding development in areas of high flood risk and is therefore very compatible with SO5.
- 3.3.16 Similarly, by directing inappropriate development away from areas of flood risk, Plan Objective SO5 indirectly avoids water contamination, maintaining water quality. Land in proximity to water bodies is of ecological importance, either for biodiversity value or for its contribution to a wider ecological network supported by the water corridor. Therefore, a risk-based approach that directs development away from waterbodies could reduce potential adverse effects on biodiversity too; making these objectives compatible. Better water quality overall is good for the population's health and wellbeing in which this Plan Objective SO5 is compatible with the SA Objective relating to health and wellbeing.
- 3.3.17 These objectives indirectly address other sustainability issues and thus share some degree of compatibility. For example, Plan Objective SO14 promotes sustainable modes of transport and thus is compatible with the Air Quality and Accessibility SA Objectives which seeks to encourage sustainable modes of transport and reducing the need to travel.
- 3.3.18 The aim of Plan Objective SO15 is to improve the existing District and other Local Centres as well as retain vitality of Blaby town centre. This is compatible with Economy and Employment SA Objective.
- 3.3.19 Plan objective SO3 states that new dwellings will be provided for to meet a range of housing needs including housing types, size, tenure and affordability. The objective also includes accommodating housing for different groups, affordable housing, housing for older persons and specialist housing which creates inclusivity. It would be most beneficial to be delivered in areas with greatest need for physical, social, economic and environment improvement.

- 3.3.20 As expected, this is very compatible with the SA objective for 'Population and Housing', and also compatible with social objectives that are influenced by housing provision (For example SA Objectives concerning health, community and population/

3.4 Identified Uncertainties

- 3.4.1 The greatest uncertainties related to Plan Objective SO12. There were also uncertainties recorded for SO7, SO11 and SO15. These uncertainties are discussed below, along with recommendations (if appropriate) as to how the Plan could move forward in a way that ensures that sustainable growth can be achieved.

SO7

- 3.4.2 Maximising previously developed land and avoidance of best and most versatile agricultural land, could be a constraint to housing delivery. There is a degree of uncertainty as to the extent to which this objective can be achieved without affecting housing delivery. However, the objective makes an important reference to a need to 'balancing the objective against needs'. This provides flexibility, but a degree of uncertainty exists as to the extent to which agricultural land and greenfield land will be protected.

SO11

- 3.4.3 Some uncertainty is recorded in terms of accessibility, as employment uses can be located in areas that promote car use. Certain sectors also promote the use of freight. Other Plan objectives which seek to ensure sustainable locations for growth should help to ensure that such issues are considered.

SO12

- 3.4.4 There are identified uncertainties with SO12 as it states rural communities outside existing urban areas could involve new services, facilities and homes. Growing the rural economy and expanding could possibly conflict with other SA objectives and Plan Objective SO1, which states that new growth will be directed to the most sustainable locations. This may or may not be within rural areas. Some issues associated with rural areas include accessibility, sensitive landscapes and cultural heritage. When considered alongside other Plan objectives, it should be possible to achieve some growth in rural areas in an appropriate way, but a degree of uncertainty exists at this stage.

SO15

- 3.4.5 There are uncertainties regarding SO9, which is concerned with town, district and local centres. The approach to uses and design of developments in these locations could have implications for cultural heritage (especially given that many heritage assets are clustered in urban or village centres).

3.5 Summary and Recommendations

- 3.5.1 The draft Plan Objectives and the SA Objectives were found to be mostly compatible, with no major incompatibilities noted.
- 3.5.2 SO1 - SO3 set the context for reasonable alternatives relating to employment and housing growth (i.e. options that would not achieve the aims could be considered to be unreasonable approaches).
- 3.5.3 SO11 – 13 and SO15 set the context for growing the economy and ensuring existing centres remain vital and viable through evolving retail patterns and functions.
- 3.5.4 Though some potential incompatibilities were identified, it was considered likely that these ought to be addressed by other Plan Objectives that deal with the issues specifically. Therefore, specific recommendations were considered unnecessary.
- 3.5.5 Though SO8 was already compatible with the SA objectives in relation to biodiversity, it was considered beneficial to strengthen the references to biodiversity recovery. It was therefore recommended that the objective could be amended to explicitly embed the principle of ‘environmental net gain’.

Box 1: A note on the evolution of draft Plan Objectives

As the Plan has progressed through the different stages of plan making, the vision and objectives have evolved to reflect updated evidence, feedback from consultation and other factors. Therefore, the aims and objectives listed in the Publication version of the Plan are not identical to those discussed above.

Worth noting are the following developments in the objectives (some of which respond positively to the recommendations made above):

- The objectives have been shortened to make them more succinct.
- Biodiversity net gain is now referenced in updated Plan objectives.
- Two additional objectives have been added to reference the need to deliver sufficient infrastructure in a timely manner.

3.6 The finalised Plan Objectives

- 3.6.1 The finalised Plan Objectives (within the Regulation 19 version of the Plan) are listed below. These largely correspond with the objectives drafted at the outset of the plan-making process, but are re-ordered, tweaked and added to in places to reflect the evolution of evidence and consultation feedback. A updated objective compatibility exercise is undertaken and presented below. This is a proportionate way to capture the implications of any minor changes to objectives.

Housing

- SO1: To provide new homes and businesses of high-quality design and co-located with a compact mix of uses accessible by Active Travel and public transport.
- SO2: To meet the overall housing need within the District and the wider Housing Market Area and deliver a range of housing types, size and tenures to address the needs of different groups.

Environment and Climate Change

- SO3: To reduce carbon dioxide emissions and encourage renewable energy generation.
- SO4: To increase the District's resilience and ability to adapt to a changing climate and the associated risks of flooding, drought, overheating and other extreme weather events.
- SO5: To make efficient use of land, water, minerals, soil, waste, energy and other resources including maximising the reuse of previously developed land or contaminated land.
- SO6: To protect and enhance the District's valued natural assets and green and blue infrastructure corridors and deliver net gain in biodiversity.
- SO7: To sustain and enhance the local landscape character and distinctiveness of Blaby's towns and villages.
- SO 8: To respect and enhance the District's historic environment including designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings.

Economy, Retail and Leisure

- SO9: To provide a mix of land and premises for employment uses to meet the needs of the District and wider Functional Economic Market Area and support jobs growth and the diversification of the local economy.

- SO10: To support the District's rural economy and the retention and improvement of existing and local services and facilities to meet the needs of local communities.
- SO11: To promote and develop tourism and leisure opportunities across the District.
- SO12: To support the continued vitality and viability of Blaby town centre and the other District and Local Centres in their roles as vibrant centres of services and facilities for local and surrounding communities and support Fosse Park as an out-of-town centre.

Infrastructure

- SO13: To help facilitate the delivery of strategic infrastructure to support the long-term housing and economic growth of the District and wider South Leicestershire area as articulated in the Strategic Growth Plan.
- SO14: To support the provision of new transport infrastructure and services, reduce the need to travel by car, the distance travelled, and increase the use of active travel and public transport to access jobs, key services and facilities
- SA15: To work with partners to ensure the timely provision of infrastructure needed to support existing and new communities.

Health and Wellbeing

- SO16: To protect new and existing communities from the harmful effects of pollution, including air, noise, contaminated land and light, and improve air quality within the District's designated 'Air Quality Management Areas'.
- SO17: To promote good design which supports the creation of resilient, active, safe, healthy and inclusive communities where people want to live, work and visit.

3.7 Compatibility with the IIA Objectives

- 3.7.1 The final set of Local Plan objectives represents a refinement of the earlier draft framework, rather than any substantive shift in strategic direction. The overarching themes of housing delivery, economic growth, environmental protection and sustainable transport are retained; however, the objectives have been restructured and streamlined to improve clarity, strengthen alignment with national policy, and provide a more coherent and internally consistent framework.
- 3.7.2 A notable change is the introduction of a more explicit and structured approach to climate change. The final objectives distinguish clearly between mitigation and adaptation, with discrete objectives addressing carbon reduction and renewable energy generation on the one hand, and climate resilience—including flooding, overheating and other risks—on the other.

- 3.7.3 This is complemented by a strengthened approach to the natural environment, with explicit reference to biodiversity net gain and a greater emphasis on the role of blue infrastructure.
- 3.7.4 The final objectives also introduce a more prominent focus on infrastructure delivery and coordination, including a dedicated objective linked to the Strategic Growth Plan and the role of partnership working. The transport objective has similarly been refined, moving beyond a general emphasis on sustainable modes to a clearer focus on reducing the need to travel and supporting modal shift, in line with wider decarbonisation objectives.
- 3.7.5 At the same time, the objectives adopt a more strategic and concise form, with some of the more detailed and prescriptive elements of the draft removed. This includes the omission of explicit references to specific groups or individual facilities. In practice, this has resulted in a degree of reorganisation, with themes that were previously combined—particularly in relation to health, accessibility and place-making—now distributed across a number of complementary objectives focused on design, transport and community outcomes.
- 3.7.6 In terms of compatibility, many of the initial conclusions remain valid. The exercise indicates that the Local Plan objectives are generally well aligned with the Sustainability Appraisal objectives, with a high level of overall compatibility.
- 3.7.7 Strong positive relationships are evident in relation to population and housing, health and wellbeing, the economy, and accessibility, particularly through objectives relating to place-making, infrastructure delivery and sustainable transport (SO1, SO13 and SO14), which contribute across multiple sustainability themes.
- 3.7.8 Compatibility with environmental objectives is more targeted, with specific objectives performing strongly in particular areas. This includes SO3 and SO4 for climate change, SO6 for biodiversity, and SO7, SO8 and SO16 for landscape, heritage and environmental protection.
- 3.7.9 Across the matrix, a number of neutral relationships are identified, reflecting the fact that many objectives are focused in scope and do not directly relate to all SA topics. Only limited areas of uncertainty arise, primarily where objectives supporting growth could have indirect environmental effects, although these are not considered significant at the strategic level.

Table 3.2: Final Plan Strategic Objectives (SO) Vs Sustainability Appraisal Objectives (SA)

	SO1	SO2	SO3	SO4	SO5	SO6	SO7	SO8	SO9	SO10	SO11	SO12	SO13	SO14	SO15	SO16	SO17
Population/Housing	+	+											+				
Health and Well-being	+	+													+		
Biodiversity Geodiversity						+											
Cultural heritage							+	+									
Minerals																	
Waste																	
Landscape and Soil					+												
Environment Protection																+	
Climate Change (flooding)				+													
Climate Change (mitigation)			+														
Economy	+	+							+			+	+				
Accessibility	+													+			

4. Introduction to reasonable alternatives

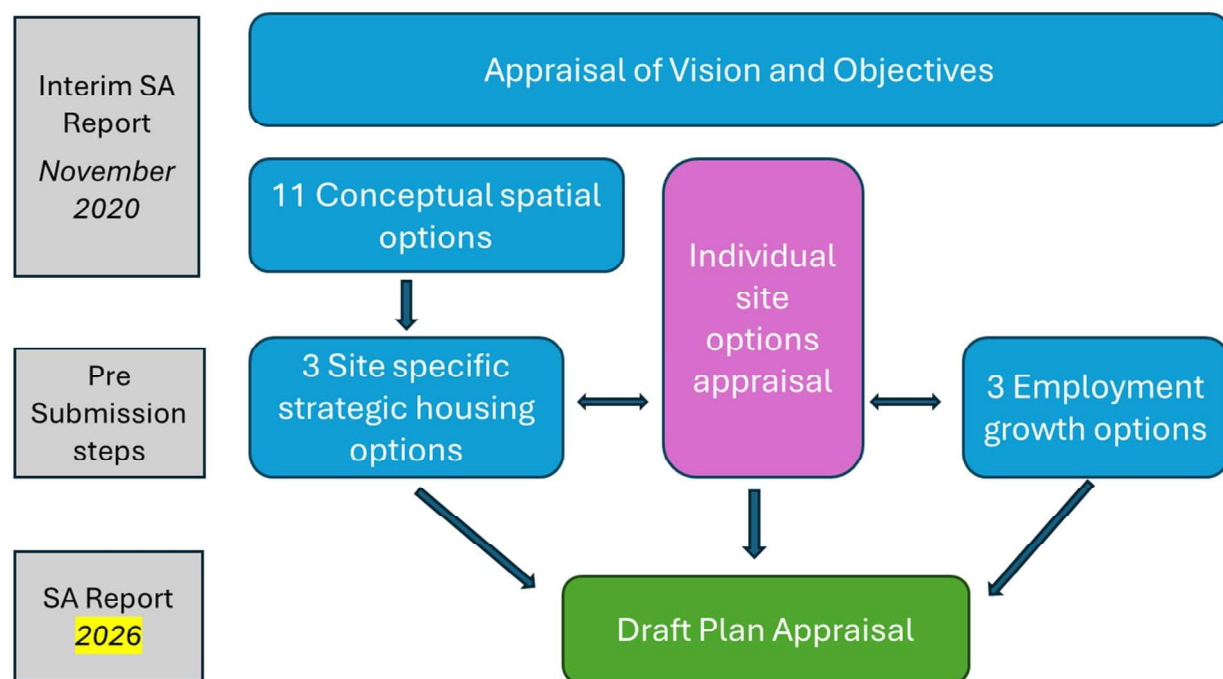
- 4.1.1 A key part of the SA process is testing different ways in which the objectives of the Plan can be delivered and the implications in terms of sustainability. The aim here is to identify an appropriate strategy, and to suggest ways in which the Plan can be improved so as to maximise benefits and minimise negative effects.
- 4.1.2 The SEA Regulations only require that 'reasonable alternatives' to the 'Plan' must be tested. However, given that Plans are multi-faceted, it is considered useful to look at the key components at the heart of the plan, and exploring how they could be addressed 'individually'.
- 4.1.3 In this instance, the key issues that the Plan Review deals with are those of spatial strategy. Therefore, the focus of options development and testing has been as follows:

Strategic options for the amount and distribution of new housing

- 4.1.4 The Council explored different options for growth and the distribution of housing, before establishing eleven reasonable alternatives that have been tested through the SA (See Chapter 6)
- 4.1.5 Strategic alternatives were reconsidered prior to the Regulation 19 stage to reflect changes to evidence, and the more advanced position of Plan making. This process is discussed in detail within Chapter 7.

Individual site options for housing and employment

- 4.1.6 The Council has explored the merits of sites on an individual basis to help understand constraints and opportunities associated with development locations. Understanding site specific issues has contributed to the appraisal process in two respects. Firstly, it has influenced the development of reasonable alternatives (i.e. packages of sites that form spatial strategies), second, it has allowed for a comparison between different site options where there are choices to be made about which sites might be more or less suitable in a particular location. This process is discussed in Chapter 8.
- 4.1.7 Each of these areas is discussed in detail in the following chapters of this report. First, the methods of appraisal are introduced in Chapter 5.



5. Appraisal Methods

5.1 Determining Significance

- 5.1.1 The options appraisals identify and evaluate 'likely significant effects' on the baseline / likely future baseline associated with each alternative; drawing on the sustainability topics and objectives as a methodological framework.
- 5.1.2 The task of forecasting effects can be challenging due to:
- The high level nature of the alternatives under consideration;
 - Being limited by definition of the baseline and (in particular) the future baseline;
 - The ability of developers to design out/mitigate effects during the planning application stage.
- 5.1.3 In light of this, when likely significant effects are predicted, this is done with an accompanying explanation of the assumptions made.¹
- 5.1.4 It is important to note that effects are predicted based upon the criteria presented within the SEA Regulations². So, for example, account is taken of the nature of effects (including magnitude, spatial coverage and duration), the sensitivity of receptors, and the likelihood of effects occurring, as far as is possible. The potential for 'cumulative' effects is also considered.
- 5.1.5 These effect 'characteristics' are described within the appraisal as appropriate under each sustainability topic. A matrix is then presented for each SA topic summarising the predicted effects visually through the use of coloured boxes (See table 5.1 below).
- 5.1.6 Where there is uncertainty, the nature of such effects has been identified. For example, an uncertain negative effect would be recorded if there is a chance that negative effects could occur but this is dependent upon unknown factors. Likewise, an uncertain significant positive effect would be predicted where it is clearly possible that notable benefits would arise, but this could be dependent on the quality of design, or the exact nature of developments.

¹ As stated by Government Guidance (The Plan Making Manual, PAS)) *"Ultimately, the significance of an effect is a matter of judgment and should require no more than a clear and reasonable justification."*

² Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

Table 5.1: Presenting the significance of effects

Type of effect	Likely	Uncertain / potential
Significant positive effects	++	++?
Minor positive effects	+	?
Neutral effects	0	0?
Minor negative effects	-	?
Significant negative effects	--	--?

6. Options consultation stage - Housing growth and distribution

6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 At this early stage of plan making, the starting point for determining an appropriate strategy was to explore the driving factors behind the need for development. Of critical importance was population and household projections and how this would translate into housing need. Also important was the need to take account of local aspirations, which should be reflected in the aims and objectives of the Plan. These factors also needed to be explored in the context of land supply, environmental constraints and infrastructure capacity.
- 6.1.2 Also important was to explore how growth could be distributed, as the same amount of growth could be delivered in different locations.
- 6.1.3 There was important Duty to Co-operate issues to consider too, such as the contribution that Blaby might need to make to meet unmet housing needs in other authorities. At the Options Consultation stage, there were predicted unmet needs for Leicester City in particular. A separate exercise was undertaken jointly by the Leicester and Leicestershire authorities to test the ways in which unmet needs could be distributed. There are links to each local authorities Adopted or emerging Local Plans to consider, as well as the accompanying SA work.

Exploring housing needs

- 6.1.4 Applying the Government Standard Methodology at this point in time provided an estimate of a minimum of 339 homes per year. The intended Plan period was 19 years, giving a total of 6,441 dwellings over the lifetime of the Plan. This target, which made allowance for affordable housing, was considered to be an appropriate 'starting point' in terms of reasonable growth strategies. For SA purposes, this was named Growth Scenario 1.
- 6.1.5 Two higher growth options were identified as reasonable alternatives for the purposes of SA. These were both established to take account of notional housing need figures in the Strategic Growth Plan, and in Leicester City's draft Local Plan (in relation to unmet needs at the time). The primary rationale was to test options that reflected:
- Blaby taking a share of unmet needs from the Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area (towards the end of the Plan period) to a greater or lesser extent.
 - The implications of higher growth options should changes to the standard methodology occur.

- 6.1.6 A lower target was tested of 9,000 dwellings (Growth Scenario 2), plus a higher target of 12,000 dwellings (Growth Scenario 3).
- 6.1.7 The Council did not consider that there were justified grounds to plan for a housing target below that suggested as the minimum when using the Standard Methodology.
- 6.1.8 Likewise, 12,000 dwellings was considered to be at the higher end of what Blaby might be expected to accommodate to account for a greater amount of unmet needs from Leicester City. Therefore, no reasonable alternatives were identified beyond this level of growth at the Options Consultation stage.

Locational Strategy

- 6.1.9 The Options Consultation document identified five potential locational strategy options:

A: Principal Urban Area focus: This represented the existing policy approach of urban concentration and directs most development to the Leicester Principal Urban Area (the PUA).

B: Extended PUA focus: This built upon Option A by extending the principal Urban Area of Leicester to encapsulate higher order villages such as Enderby, Narborough, Blaby, Countesthorpe and Whetstone.

C: Spread the distribution: This option provided a wider spread of growth to the medium and smaller villages.

D: Strategic sites / Garden Villages: This approach was consistent with the Strategic Growth Plan and Blaby District Growth Plan. Infrastructure-led growth would help to lay the foundations for longer term growth aspirations and help reduce the impact of development in existing settlements.

E: Single new settlement: There were reasonable site options where a standalone settlement could be developed (though this would extend beyond the plan period). This was a variation of Option D, but a much more focused approach to strategic development sites in fewer locations.

6.2 Summary of the Reasonable Alternatives

- 6.2.1 Combining the growth and distribution options discussed above resulted in eleven reasonable alternatives being established for appraisal in the SA at the Options Consultation stage. These are set out in further detail below and each has a corresponding map to aid in the understanding of distribution (See Appendix B).
- 6.2.2 The tables below show approximately how much growth could have been involved at different levels of the settlement hierarchy. The baseline position, which consisted of existing completions and committed development is shown for context in terms of the additional growth that would be directed to each different location.

- 6.2.3 Appendix A gives an overview of the settlements that sit within each layer of the hierarchy, and further detail on the number of existing commitments and the potential supply at each settlement (at the time this appraisal was undertaken alongside the Options Consultation).
- 6.2.4 There was an assumption that dwellings would be shared equally amongst the different settlements that fall into each layer of the settlement hierarchy. However, where this was not possible due to a lack of land supply or critical constraints, then the growth was assumed to be split equally amongst the other settlements that did have capacity.
- 6.2.5 Where the amounts were lower than the baseline position in the PUA, this was to reflect a situation whereby delivery rates on existing commitments and site allocations could be slower than anticipated).

Table 6.1(a): Reasonable alternatives (scale of housing)

Growth Scenario	Overall Scale of Growth	Distribution Options
1 Standard Method	6441	1a
2 Standard Method plus unmet need (Low)	9000	2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, 2e
3 Standard Method plus unmet need (High)	12000	3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, 3e

Table 6.1(b): Breakdown of the reasonable alternatives (distribution of housing)

Option	Baseline	1	2a	2b	2c	2d	2e	3a	3b	3c	3d	3e
Principal Urban Area	5283	5153	5940	4950	4500	4500	4050	7920	6600	6000	5400	5400
Extended PUA	314	644	1800	3150	2700	900	0	2400	4200	3600	1200	0
Medium Villages	571	580	1170	900	1350	900	0	1560	1200	1800	1200	0
Smaller Villages	24	64	90	0	450	24	0	120	0	600	0	0
Strategic sites	0	0	0	0	0	3150	4950	0	0	0	4200	6600
Total	6192	6441	9000	9000	9000	9000	9000	12000	12000	12000	12000	12000

6.3 Summary of the Appraisal Findings: Spatial Options

Introduction

- 6.3.1 The effects for each spatial option were determined through assessment against the SA Framework. The detailed discussion of effects is set out in Appendix C, where the effects are described and explained, followed by a determination of the significance of effects for each option (against the SA Objectives).
- 6.3.2 A colouring and symbol approach (set out in table 5.1) is used to visually represent the sustainability performance of each option against the SA Objectives. These are then brought together in a summary matrix to illustrate the performance of each option across the full range of SA objectives (see table 6.2 below).

Table 6.2: Visual summary of the options appraisal process

Sustainability Appraisal Objective	Option 1	Option 2a	Option 2b	Option 2c	Option 2d	Option 2e	Option 3a	Option 3b	Option 3c	Option 3d	Option 3e
Housing	+	++	++	++	++	++?	++	++	++	++	++?
Health: Facilities and services	+	++	++	++	++?	++	++	++	++	++	++
Health: Amenity and accessibility	0	?	?	-	0	0	-	-	--	0	0
Biodiversity Geodiversity	0	?	?	?	?	0?	-	-	-	-	0?
Cultural Heritage	0	?	?	-	?	-	--	--?	--?	-	--?
Waste	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Minerals	0	?	?	?	?	0	?	-	-	-	0
Landscape	0	-	-	--?	-	--?	--?	--?	--	--?	--?
Soil	0	-	-	-	-	-	--?	--?	--?	--?	--?
Air	0	?	-	-	-	--?	--	--	--	--	--?
Water: Nitrates	0	0	0	0	?	?	0	0	0	?	?
Water: Networks	0	0	0	0	?	?	-	-	-	?	?
Climate change: Flooding	0	0	0	?	0?	?	?	?	-	?	?
Climate change: Mitigation	0	+	+	-	-	-	0	0	--?	--?	--?
Economy: Growth potential	+	++	++	++	++?	++?	++	++	++	++?	++?
Economy: Pressures	0	0	0	0	?	-	?	?	?	-	-
Accessibility: Sustainability	0	+	+	+	+	++?	++?	++?	++?	++?	++?
Accessibility: Congestion	0	-	-	-	--?	--?	--?	--?	--?	--?	--?

Summary of Effects

Scenario 1

- 6.3.3 Given that the level of additional growth is relatively small, the effects for most of the sustainability objectives are neutral. The exception is for housing, economy and health and wellbeing, as additional planned growth will bring some minor positive effects in terms of bringing investment into existing settlements.

Scenario 2

- 6.3.4 Each of the options involved under Scenario 2 are likely to have a wider range of effects across the sustainability objectives.
- 6.3.5 Given that the options involve growth in similar locations (with exception of the strategic sites), there are similarities in terms of the effects that are predicted. This is the case for housing, with each option giving rise to significant positive effects. The exception is Option 2e, where placing all growth in one location brings some uncertainty about delivery.
- 6.3.6 Other topic areas where the effects are similar are waste, biodiversity and soil.
- 6.3.7 Options 2a and 2b perform relatively similarly in terms of most of the sustainability objectives, which reflects their location close to the edge of Leicester. The main difference is that Option 2a performs marginally better with regards to air quality.
- 6.3.8 Option 2c performs less well compared to Options 2a and 2b in terms of landscape, cultural heritage, climate change mitigation, flooding, and health and wellbeing. This is mainly due to increased dispersal to settlements where environmental effects on settlement character could be higher. More development in the Medium and Smaller Villages would also mean that some communities have poorer access to facilities and could be more likely to increase emissions from car travel.
- 6.3.9 Options 2d and 2e involve strategic sites, which brings more uncertainty about whether positive or negative effects would occur. This is because there are choices about which strategic sites would be involved and the nature of development.
- 6.3.10 It also increases the likelihood that significant effects could arise given that large amounts of growth are focused in certain locations (which can increase economies of scale and / or the magnitude of effects. This is highly dependent upon the supporting local services and infrastructure provided and the layout and design of development.

Scenario 3

- 6.3.11 At the higher level of growth, the significant positive effects with regards to housing are likely to be major for each option, and growth will also bring more opportunities to enhance community facilities and new transport infrastructure. However, this scale of growth brings greater potential for negative effects with regards to environmental factors such as landscape, soil, air quality and cultural heritage.
- 6.3.12 Though negative effects are more likely to arise at this scale of growth (regardless of distribution), it should be noted that mitigation and enhancement could play an important role in altering these effects and perhaps achieving positive effects. This would be highly dependent on development being supported by infrastructure and through securing high quality design. A focus on environmental net gain would help to ensure that negative effects were avoided and opportunities for enhancement secured. There will need to be strong plan policies and supporting mechanisms in place to ensure that this occurs.

7. Pre-Submission Stage

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 In the period since the Local Plan Options document was published (January 2021) several factors have combined to require the Council to re-establish its housing and employment land requirements (and to review the emerging spatial strategy); these include:

- Changes to the NPPF and the Governments review of the Standard Housing Methodology (with implications for Local Needs for Blaby as well as wider needs in Leicestershire).
- Responses to the Local Plan Options Consultation.

7.1.2 In response, the Council has revisited strategic options for housing and employment growth and distribution. The following section will outline key changes to housing needs at the HMA and District Level as a result of changes to national guidance and the Standard Method published by government and joint working with other surrounding Councils.

Leicester & Leicestershire Authorities - Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) relating to Housing and Employment Land Needs (February 2021)

7.1.3 The 2021 SoCG committed the Leicester and Leicestershire Council's to cooperate on strategic cross boundary matters, including agreeing the redistribution of any unmet housing and employment need with a view to agreeing an apportionment of the unmet need from Leicester City to the surrounding Districts and Boroughs. However, the authorities also agreed the change in Leicester's housing need on 16 December 2020 resulting from Government changes to the Standard Method for calculating housing need, (which applied a 35% uplift to the largest 20 cities), was so significant additional evidence to inform the distribution of unmet need should be collected. This included the preparation of a new Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (HENA), Strategic Growth Options Study, Strategic Transport Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal.

Leicester & Leicestershire Authorities - Statement of Common Ground relating to Housing and Employment Land Needs (July 2022)

7.1.4 An updated SoCG was published in July 2022. This considered housing and employment needs for Leicester and Leicestershire to 2036; the identified unmet need to 2036; and the apportionment of unmet need across the Leicestershire to 2036.

7.1.5 The Housing and Economic Needs Assessment for Leicester and Leicestershire (HENA), published in June 2022, formed a major component of the evidence needed to identify how to distribute local housing needs.

- 7.1.6 In the case of Blaby, the starting point of the annual Local Housing Need (Standard Method) identified in the HENA was 341 homes.
- 7.1.7 It had already been established as early as 2017 that Leicester City would have significant unmet housing need because of its inability to find sites within the City boundary. The government publication of a revised standard method for calculating housing need in December 2020 coupled with the release of new affordability data significantly increased the City's housing need to 39,421 homes between 2020 and 2036. When compared to the City's supply of 20,720 homes, this left an unmet need of 18,700 homes to be accommodated elsewhere.
- 7.1.8 Blaby District Council was apportioned a significant amount of this unmet need as a result of its proximity of Leicester City; a need to ensure an appropriate employment distribution; the need to balance the delivery of jobs and homes at a local level; a need to limit the need to travel and a need to ensure housing stock growth in some other authorities areas was not excessive. This resulted in Blaby being apportioned an unmet need from Leicester of 346 homes per year or 5,536 homes over Leicester City's Plan period of 2020-36. This was equivalent to 29.6% of the City's unmet need. Blaby District Council approved the signing of the 2022 Statement of Common Ground in July 2022.

Leicester & Leicestershire Authorities - Statement of Common Ground relating to Housing and Employment Land Needs (December 2025)

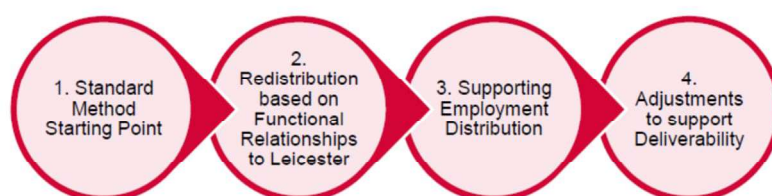
- 7.1.9 The Government revised the Standard Method, through changes to national planning policy and guidance in December 2024. To reflect these changes, it was considered necessary to update the Housing Distribution element of the HENA to inform the Local Plans which are yet to be submitted for examination within the Leicestershire Housing Market Area.
- 7.1.10 The revised (2024) Standard Method is fundamentally different to that used prior to 2024 as it uses the current dwelling stock as a baseline (rather than household projections), to provide greater consistency across Council areas in England but applies a higher affordability ratchet to inflate figures towards the Government's housing delivery targets. This ensures that areas which are the least affordable have more challenging housing targets.³
- 7.1.11 Under the new Standard Method, the increase in the housing requirement across the whole Leicester and Leicestershire Housing Market Area is relatively modest; 5,892 homes per annum versus a previous requirement of 5,713 homes per annum. This is an increase of 3.1%. However local housing need in Blaby is significantly higher with the local housing need increasing from 329 homes⁴ to 539 homes per annum (an increase of around 64%).

³ A baseline figure is calculated as 0.8% of existing housing stock, using the latest stock estimates data published by Government. An affordability uplift is then applied with a 0.95% adjustment applied for every 1% which the median house price to workplace-based earnings ratio was above 5. The affordability ratio is taken as the average over the 5 most recent years of data

⁴ This was the District's SM need immediately before changes to the NPPF and SM in December 2024. It was slightly lower than the need captured in the HENA (341 homes p.a.) due to an improvement in housing affordability

- 7.1.12 Whilst most of the Districts and Boroughs in Leicestershire have seen a significant increase in Local Housing Need both Leicester City and Charnwood have seen reductions in need. Of particular note, is the reduction in need within the City which has reduced from 2,464 homes per annum to 1,588 homes per annum. In simple terms therefore housing requirements have shifted from the City to the shire authorities.
- 7.1.13 Having regard to housing land completions in Leicester City between 2020-24 (4,129) a residual housing requirement of 16,601 homes is identified between 2024-2036. Given that the Leicester Local Plan's total need for the remaining 12 years of its Plan is 19,056 homes (1588 homes per annum) a shortfall of 2,455 homes is identified for the City to 2036.
- 7.1.14 The apportionment of unmet need is based substantially on the functional relationship of the Districts with Leicester City although some adjustment is also made to take account of the need to align jobs and housing growth. The consideration of the functional relationship includes migration flows and commuting patterns. These flows are influenced by the spatial geography of Leicester. It also worth noting that the Leicester Urban Area boundary (as defined by ONS⁵) extends to include Braunstone, Thorpe Astley and Glenfield in Blaby District. This underlines the close link between some parts of Blaby and the Leicester City. As a result, Blaby is apportioned the second highest proportion of the City's unmet need (31.5%) behind Charnwood Borough (31.7%), which geographically is double the size of Blaby and has a population around 75% larger.
- 7.1.15 In respect of unmet need to 2036 North West Leicestershire is assigned a significant apportionment to balance expected jobs growth in that District. The allocation of 73 homes per annum to North West Leicestershire reduces the residual need to be shared amongst the remaining districts that have the physical capacity to accommodate any unmet need. For Blaby this means our apportionment of unmet need to 2036 is 45 homes per annum.

Figure 7.1: The Housing and Economic Needs Assessment Approach to Redistributing Housing Growth



Source: HENA Updated Housing Distribution Paper, Leicester and Leicestershire Authorities, November 2025

⁵ ONS Built Up Area boundaries

- 7.1.16 Post 2036 it remains the case that Leicester City is unlikely to be able to fully meet its own housing need. Given that Blaby's Plan will run to 2042 there is a need to try and understand the scale of likely unmet need after 2036 until the end of our proposed plan period, whilst accepting the challenges of looking this far into the future. Nonetheless it is appropriate provision should be made in Blaby's emerging Plan to accommodate likely unmet need from the City post 2036.
- 7.1.17 Whilst detailed work to identify the capacity in the City post 2036 has yet to be undertaken, the Leicester and Leicestershire Councils have jointly commissioned a Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (HENA) update. This was completed in November 2025 and forecasts unmet need arising from the City post 2036 and sets out a methodology to distribute unmet need to the Leicestershire District's moving forward. A Statement of Common Ground which includes the housing distribution proposed within the report was agreed by Blaby District Council in January 2026⁶
- 7.1.18 Based on available evidence, a conservative assessment of the City's capacity post 2036 has been made and it estimated that annual housing supply could be in the range of 565-965 dwellings per annum⁷. A midpoint of 765 dwellings per annum has been agreed by Leicester City Council and the consultants preparing the housing distribution report and based on the City delivering 7,650 homes over the ten years from 2036-2046 an annual unmet need of 823 homes is identified for the City, (8,230 homes over a ten-year period to 2046). This will need to be apportioned to and met by the District's. Based on the percentage apportionment used to calculate pre 2036 housing numbers this would translate into an annual apportionment for Blaby of 256 homes per annum post 2036.

7.2 Reconsidering housing strategy options

Scale of growth

- 7.2.1 Three scales of housing delivery were tested at Local Plan Options stage, as previously noted. Two of these options (6,441 homes and 9,000 homes over the plan period) are now below the new Standard Method requirement published by the Government and therefore are no longer considered to be reasonable. In terms of scale of growth, the third option (12,000 homes over the plan period) remains relevant, but the understanding of land supply is different (and therefore further appraisal is considered necessary).
- 7.2.2 At the current stage, the first reasonable alternative would be planning to meet the minimum housing need identified through the standard methodology (539 dwellings per annum). This equates to approximately 10,000 -10,500 homes over the 17-year plan period 2025-2042⁸ allowing for the inclusion of an appropriate delivery buffer.

⁶ [Agenda for Council on Tuesday, 27th January, 2026, 5.30 p.m. - Blaby District Council](#)

⁷ An average of about 1,168 homes were delivered per year between 2012 and 2022.

⁸ December 2024 represents the publication of updated standard method which increased the Districts SM housing requirement from 329 to 542 homes per annum. 2025 is therefore taken as the start date for the Plan. The standard method is periodically

- 7.2.3 Based on the Council's review of its Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and having regard to the evidence collected to inform plan-making there are no convincing planning arguments that Blaby would be justified in planning to deliver housing at a level below the Standard Method minimum target.
- 7.2.4 An important issue for Blaby is the need to consider the contribution that it can make to meeting unmet needs arising in neighbouring authorities. The Leicester & Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan anticipates that housing needs may need to be redistributed, particularly to account for unmet needs in Leicester City. The Leicester and Leicestershire authorities have a strong working relationship and are continuing to collaborate to distribute housing needs.
- 7.2.5 The Leicester Local Plan 2020-2036 was adopted in March 2026 and as noted above Blaby will need to accommodate 45 homes per annum to meet the City's unmet need to 2036 (11 years) and 256 homes per annum post 2036 to meet unmet need from the city (6 years). In total this means Blaby will need to accommodate 2,031 homes to meet the City's unmet need between 2025-42. When added to the District's own standard method need of 9,163 (539 homes per annum over 17 years). This gives a housing requirement of 11,195 homes or when annualised over the whole plan period 658.5 homes per year.
- 7.2.6 It is reasonable to suggest that Blaby's new Local Plan should plan for its own housing need and a proportion of the shortfall for Leicester reflecting the Council's stated position regarding the SoCG as highlighted above⁹. (i.e. there is justification to planning for a growth figure higher than the standard methodology minimum).
- 7.2.7 This second reasonable alternative we have tested, therefore, is 12,000 homes in total (again this number allowing for an appropriate buffer). Though this level of growth has been tested previously as noted above the context underpinning this requirement has changed.
- 7.2.8 In addition to unmet needs arising within Leicester City, there is potential that other districts may request that Blaby accommodate some of their housing needs. It is reasonable to expect that where unmet need arises from an adjoining or borough/district, or indeed from across the wider HMA Blaby could be asked to accommodate a proportion of this. There is no certainty regarding whether such a need exists. However, what is clear is that it would be prudent to test a higher growth option that anticipates Blaby having to accommodate further growth. A higher growth scenario could also be reflective of an approach that provides a higher degree of choice and flexibility to the housing market.

updated and at the time of writing the SM for Blaby stood at 539. Assuming Plan adoption as set out in The Council's Local Development scheme is 2027, we have assumed a 15 year plan at the point of adoption as set out in paragraph 22 of the NPPF. This gives a Plan end date as 2042 and a 17-year plan period.

⁹ [Agenda for Council on Tuesday, 27th January, 2026, 5.30 p.m. - Blaby District Council](#)

7.2.9 It is also worth noting that even if a higher housing requirement isn't required to meet our own need or unmet need from a surrounding district or borough the allocation of additional sites (i.e. a greater number of dwellings) could be an important factor in ensuring our plan remains up to date and robust. For example it could ensure there remains an adequate supply of new homes should affordability deteriorate during the course of preparing the plan (and so lead to increased housing requirements as a result of changes to the Standard Method in Blaby), or should any delay to plan preparation leading to the plan period being extended and therefore housing need within the plan period increasing. Therefore, testing a higher growth option would also allow us to understand how any further allocation of homes could affect the district even if a greater need for new homes does not arise. The higher growth option we have tested is 13,500 homes.

7.2.10 In summary, the following three growth scenarios are considered to be reasonable and are tested in this chapter:

- **10,500 homes** equivalent to 539 dpa together with an appropriate delivery buffer – *This reflects what the Council considers to be the minimum housing target that should be planned for to meet identified local housing need.*
- **12,000 homes** / 658 dpa – together with an appropriate delivery buffer - *This reflects the District's Minimum housing need and the apportionment of some unmet need from Leicester City at a level proposed by the Housing Distribution Paper (Nov 2025).*
- **13,500 homes** / 750 dpa together with an appropriate delivery buffer - *This provides a higher level of growth to assess the potential impacts of higher growth should this be required to address unmet need in other surrounding districts or boroughs, or if greater provision is required to provide a stronger buffer reflecting potential constraints or issues which could affect housing delivery in the District.*

Distribution of housing growth

7.2.11 It is important to acknowledge that significant work has already been undertaken in developing an appropriate evidence-based spatial strategy. This includes testing a range of distribution options within the SA at the Options stage of plan-making. A site appraisal and selection process has also been undertaken in tandem with the SA and has formed the 'bottom-up' evidence to help establish an appropriate strategy that is deliverable.

7.2.12 It is not necessary to revisit distribution strategies at this stage of development that have already been tested and discounted. It is also important to identify elements of the strategy that are critical to meeting housing needs, and which accord with the emerging strategic approach to growth.

- 7.2.13 At this current stage of plan-making, the Council has a greater understanding of the supply position, and it should be noted that a significant amount of growth is already 'committed' by way of sites with planning permission (detailed and outline). At the time of writing there were over 5,100 homes committed within the District, together with a further 8 applications accounting for 1,064 homes which have a resolution to grant planning permission subject to S106 agreements being made. This means around two thirds of the homes needed to meet Blaby's own need to 2042 (the lower growth option cited above) already have planning permission or benefit from a resolution to grant planning permission.
- 7.2.14 The spatial distribution of residual growth is based on maximising sustainable opportunities at each level of the settlement hierarchy (which was found to be an appropriate strategy at previous stages of appraisal). Given the scale of growth required to meet needs, growth is proposed at all levels of the hierarchy in a proportionate way.
- 7.2.15 The inclusion of two strategic sites is also considered to be important to the delivery of housing and helping to build a case for the delivery of strategic infrastructure in the longer-term. The allocation of strategic sites will allow the Council to work towards its own ambitions for strategic growth¹⁰ as well as reflect the broad vision for growth outlined in the Leicester & Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan¹¹. Therefore, these sites feature for all three growth scenarios at this stage (although for the higher growth scenarios, housing delivery assumed on strategic sites in the plan period would be slightly greater).
- 7.2.16 However, the Council acknowledges that housing delivery on large strategic sites generally can be complex^{12,13}, as reflected in lessons learned from the delivery of 'New Lubbethorpe' and other new settlements located elsewhere across the Country. These sites can take a longer length of time to 'get going'; which often means that such developments may have to extend outside of a single plan period. Therefore, the Council acknowledges that such strategic sites may only deliver a limited number of homes in the plan period compared to their overall capacity (and this is reflected in the three growth options). In this regard, distribution options D and E examined at the Options Consultation stage are considered to be unreasonable in the current context.
- 7.2.17 To accommodate a greater amount of growth under scenario 2 the additional sites identified still broadly follow the settlement hierarchy. Though additional sites are proposed in the PUA and larger villages as well as a notable proportion in the medium villages, together with slightly increased delivery at the two new settlements.

¹⁰ [Appendix - Blaby District Growth Plan.pdf](#)

¹¹ [Final-LL-SGP-December-2018-1.pdf](#)

¹² [start-to-finish-3_how-quickly-do-large-scale-housing-sites-deliver.pdf](#)

¹³ [Plan-making - GOV.UK](#) Paragraph: 060 Reference ID: 61-060-20190315

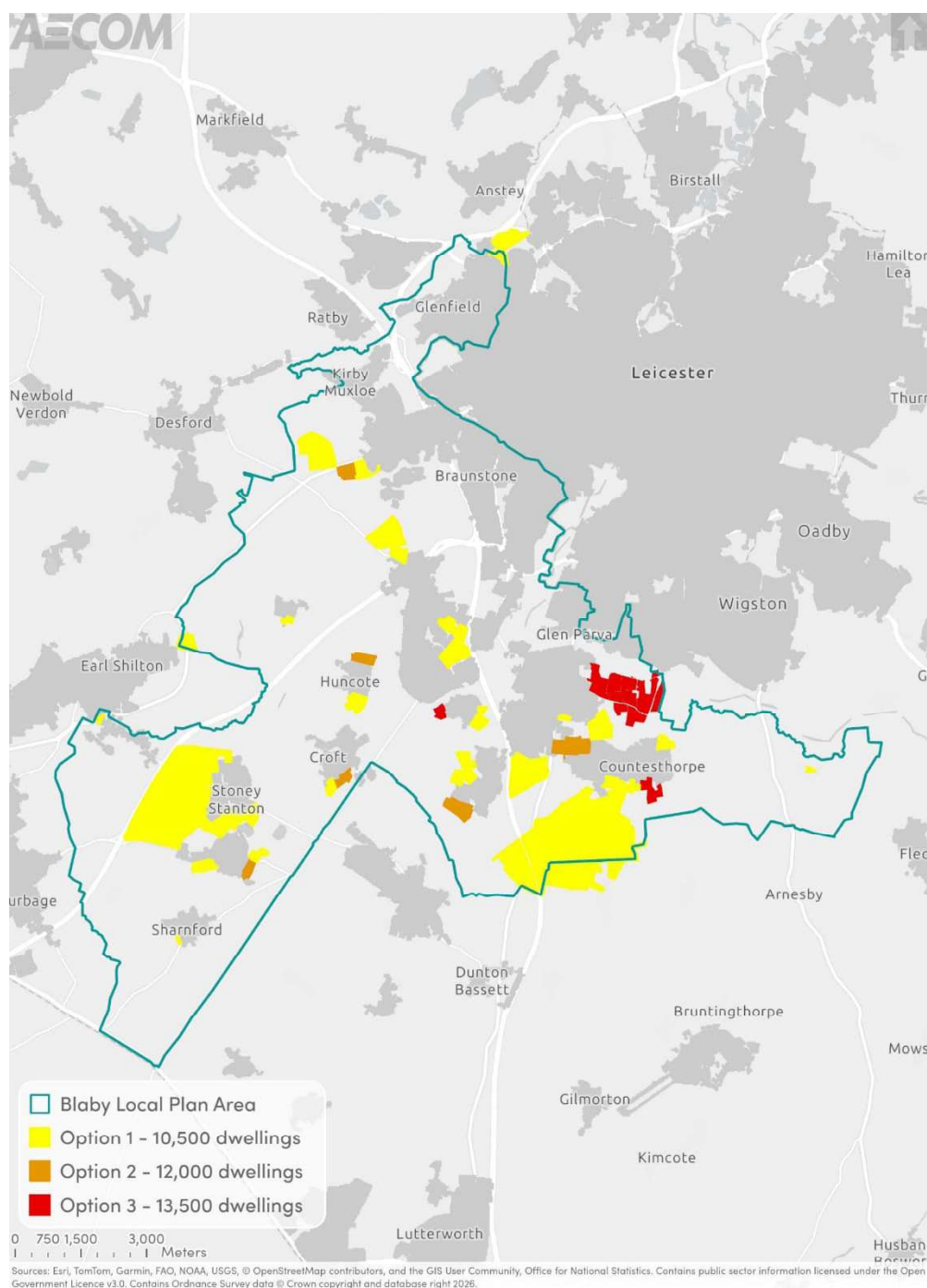
Revision date: 15 03 2019

- 7.2.18 The inclusion of sites in the larger villages (including Blaby) are driven by sustainability considerations as these are well served by local services and facilities.
- 7.2.19 The inclusion of sites in the medium villages reflects the need to deliver growth throughout the settlement hierarchy but also takes account of the fact that there are well advanced planning applications, most of which have resolutions to grant permission which have been considered under the 'tilted balance' across this tier of the hierarchy. These sites will therefore represent developments with a high likelihood of being able to address short term housing needs to meet the Government's objective of boosting housing delivery in the near term and will help ensure the Council can demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply at the point the plan is adopted.
- 7.2.20 In essence, the only reasonable approach at this stage is to combine elements of the options explored at Options Consultation stage (rather than focusing too much on one specific level of the settlement hierarchy to meet residual needs).
- 7.2.21 For growth scenario 3, growth in Blaby is pushed further, which may be considered logical given that this village lies close to the urban area of the PUA. Further provision is also made within the other larger villages to boost delivery further - reflecting that further sites in the PUA are likely to be environmentally constrained, or not deliverable in the plan period owing to the scale of growth already proposed in some locations. There would also be further limited growth included in this option for medium villages as well as slightly higher levels of growth assumed for the strategic sites.
- 7.2.22 Pushing growth beyond 13,500 homes per annum is likely to result in the allocation of sites that are more environmentally constrained, at the bottom of the settlement hierarchy, or in locations where there are already significant levels of growth committed and so cumulatively could lead to notable cumulative impacts affecting villages and communities and so could lead to unsustainable patterns of growth. It is also unlikely that the housing market could sustain growth levels significantly beyond that level for which there is an identified need. The Council does not consider it necessary or realistic to appraise growth in excess of its existing higher growth option (option C) though this will need to be kept under review.

Table 7.1 Trajectory for housing for each of the growth scenario options

	Option 1 10500 dwellings	Option 2 12000 dwellings	Option 3 13500 dwellings
‘Constants’			
Committed	5100	5100	5100
Windfall allowance	480	480	480
Total	5580	5580	5580
Residual Need (housing need from new allocations)	4920	6420	7920
Housing Distribution*			
PUA	6127 (58%)	6377 (53%)	6377 (47%)
Larger Villages	2286 (22%)	2661 (22%)	3586 (27%)
Medium Villages	957 (9%)	1478 (12%)	1683 (12%)
Smaller Villages	114 (1%)	114 (1%)	114 (1%)
Strategic Sites	1005 (10%)	1405 (12%)	1765 (13%)
Total	10489 (100%)	12035 (100%)	13525 (100%)

* Housing distribution (having regard to existing commitments)

Figure 7.2 Site allocations under each strategic option

7.3 Appraisal findings for the housing strategy options

7.3.1 The effects for each option have been determined through assessment against the SA Framework. The detailed discussion of effects is set out in Appendix F, where the effects are described and explained, followed by a determination of the significance of effects for each option (against the SA Objectives).

7.3.2 A colouring and symbol approach is used to visually represent the sustainability performance of each option against the SA Objectives. These are then brought together in a summary matrix to illustrate the performance of each option across the full range of SA objectives (see table 7.2 below).

Table 7.2 Visual summary of the options appraisal process (Pre Submission)

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Health: Facilities	++ ?	++	++
Health: Amenity and leisure	+	+	+
Population and housing	++	++	++
Biodiversity and Geodiversity	-	-	-
Cultural Heritage	._?	._?	._?
Waste	0?	0?	0?
Minerals	?	?	._?
Landscape	--?	--?	--
Soil	--	--	--
Water quality	._?	._?	--?
Air quality	._?	._?	-
Climate Change Mitigation	+?	+?	+?
Flooding	._?	._?	._?
Economy	+++?	++	++
Congestion	._?	._?	._?
Sustainable travel	++	++	++

7.3.3 All three options show broadly similar outcomes (in terms of significant effects) across most sustainability topics, with consistent positive effects on population and housing and sustainable travel, and negative impacts on biodiversity, soil, and landscape and 'congestion'.

7.3.4 Areas such as cultural heritage, water quality, flooding, and climate change mitigation are marked by uncertainty across all options.

7.3.5 Key differences emerge in three areas:

- **Economy and housing:** Options 2 and 3 offer clearer economic and housing related benefits, while Option 1 is more uncertain.

- **Water:** Option 3 is more likely to have a significant negative effect compared to options 1 and 2, but there is a degree of uncertainty.
- **Air Quality:** Option 3 shows a more definite negative impact, making Options 1 and 2 slightly more favourable.
- **Minerals:** Option 3 may have a slightly more negative effect compared to the others.
- **Landscape:** Whilst all three options are predicted to have significant effects on landscape, this is more certain / likely for Option 3 compared to options 1 and 2.

7.3.6 From a decision-making perspective, Options 2 and 3 may be stronger if economic certainty and housing delivery is prioritised, while Option 1 or 2 could be preferable where environmental sensitivity is a greater concern. It should be noted however, that the differences are marginal in respect of most sustainability topics.

7.3.7 Broadly speaking, the positive effects associated with greater housing delivery can be achieved without having a significantly different effect on environmental factors compared to a lower amount of growth.

7.3.8 Though the significance of effects is predicted to be similar across all three options, it is still possible to differentiate which options are preferable in relative terms for many of the SA objectives. This 'ranking' of the options is demonstrated in table 7.3 below. In some instances, the options are all differentiated, but in others, some options are ranked on par (for example, for biodiversity, option 1 is ranked most preferable, but options 2 and 3 are ranked the same).

Table 7.3 Comparative rank for performance for the options

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Health: Facilities	1	2	3
Health: Amenity and leisure	=	=	=
Population and housing	3	2	1
Biodiversity and Geodiversity	1	2	2
Cultural Heritage	1	2	3
Waste	1	2	3
Minerals	1	2	3
Landscape	1	2	3
Soil	1	2	3
Water quality	1	2	3
Air quality	1	2	3
Climate Change Mitigation	1	2	3
Flooding	1	1	2
Economy	3	2	1
Congestion	1	2	3
Sustainable travel	3	2	1

Rationale for selecting the preferred approach

7.3.9 The Council's preferred option is broadly consistent with Option 2¹⁴. This makes provision for our own identified local housing need as well as a proportion of unmet need from the City, based on the functional relationship which the District Council agreed it would accommodate at Council in 2026. This option also provides for an appropriate buffer to provide a degree of flexibility should delivery assumptions regarding some sites change over the plan period. This option does not make further provision for any unmet need that may arise from elsewhere in the Leicestershire Housing Market Area. However, notwithstanding the above preference, it is clear that the environmental effects resulting from both options 2 and 3 are relatively similar.

¹⁴ The sites proposed for allocation in the Plan do not align perfectly with those outlined under option 2. This reflects the changing nature of the baseline position with regards to active planning applications and the need to respond to the full range of evidence relating to sites. A limitation of the appraisal of strategic options is that it represents a snapshot in time when appraisals are undertaken.

- 7.3.10 Reflecting on this fact, and having regard to the complexity, in particular in respect of infrastructure, and scale of some of the allocations in the Plan the Council is minded to include a larger buffer to provide flexibility should some sites not come forwards as expected. This will provide a greater level of certainty that a 5 year housing land supply can be maintained even where sites start later or build out slower than we anticipate.
- 7.3.11 In terms of housing distribution, the Council considered a range of reasonable options in its interim appraisal, all of which looked to distribute growth throughout the settlement hierarchy, with some distribution options directing significant levels of growth to strategic sites or new settlements.
- 7.3.12 Having reviewed these options, in consideration of evidence and key stakeholder engagement the Council concluded it is not realistic to direct too much growth to the strategic sites in the plan period. This is due to infrastructure and delivery complexities of these sites, requiring longer timeframes from planning to development as well as a ceiling on the annual delivery rates once construction starts. In forecasting how much growth such sites could deliver in the plan period officers have had regard to available evidence such as Start to Finish 3¹⁵, published by Lichfields and its own experience in delivering the New Lubbethorpe development which has been building out in Blaby since 2016.
- 7.3.13 However, the Council remains committed to moving towards the delivery of strategic sites to meet the aspirations of the strategic growth plan as well as Blaby's own Growth Plan in the creation of new places in the district. These sites are therefore considered an important part of planning for growth and infrastructure provision in South Leicestershire in the longer term.
- 7.3.14 In respect of the PUA, the Council considers these settlements to be the most sustainable. However, there is a limit to the number of sites which can be considered unconstrained in the PUA. Several of the PUA settlements have very few sites put forward through the SHELAA because they are already urban in nature with few sites available for growth. Where sites are available these are often affected by constraints such as flood risk (Glen Parva) or heritage (Kirby Muxloe).
- 7.3.15 Beyond the PUA and strategic sites, proportionate growth in the Larger and Medium Villages is required especially in the short to medium term. It is not considered sustainable or realistic to direct significant growth to the smaller villages and hamlets given the Council's vision which seeks to ensure development is well connected to local services, shops, green spaces, jobs and education and our aspirations to provide genuine transport choice for shorter trips using active travel modes such as walking, cycling, and wheeling¹⁶.

¹⁵ https://lichfields.uk/media/w3wjmw0/start-to-finish-3_how-quickly-do-large-scale-housing-sites-deliver.pdf

¹⁶ This notion is also supported by the earlier assessment work that explored the implications of higher levels of growth in the smaller villages. Although the supply position and context for growth has moved on since the issues and options stage

- 7.3.16 It is noteworthy that the Council's adopted Local Plan sought to direct most growth to the PUA (around two thirds of growth in the last plan was proposed for the PUA settlements) but housing delivery in these settlements has consistently been at a significantly lower level than the adopted Plan provided for.
- 7.3.17 Given that the housing need for the District now indicates that 539 homes per year are needed to meet Blaby's own need and 119 homes are required to meet the City's unmet need, there is also perhaps a little more flexibility to distribute some growth away from the PUA to the villages than was the case in historic plans. The preferred approach is to deliver around half of the growth we are proposing in the emerging local plan in the PUA.
- 7.3.18 This leaves around a quarter of the new housing growth to be allocated to the larger villages of Blaby, Countesthorpe, Enderby Narborough and Whetstone and around a 12% of growth being apportioned to the medium villages which comprise Cosby, Croft, Huncote, Littlethorpe, Sapcote and Stoney Stanton. However, at the time of writing, it is worth highlighting that most of the allocations proposed for the villages have been subject to planning applications and a notable proportion are already committed or benefit from a resolution to grant planning permission. It is likely that many of the remaining sites will be permitted before the emerging plan is adopted given the application of the 'tilted balance' within planning decisions falling within Blaby District. On this basis it is unrealistic to seek a reduction in allocations in the medium villages in particular, but to a lesser extent in the larger villages too.
- 7.3.19 Therefore the distribution of growth in Blaby is to some extent controlled by existing circumstances, such as where sites are already committed or likely to be committed, the ability of the PUA to accommodate growth, the unsuitability of smaller settlements to accommodate high levels of growth given their less sustainable and accessible nature and the long lead in times and likely build out rates we can expect on strategic sites.

7.4 Employment strategy

Exploring options

- 7.4.1 The Council examined the evidence base to determine the quantum and type of employment land needed in Blaby (and the wider functional employment area). In identifying reasonable alternatives, the Council was also mindful of the need to meet plan objectives, the need for suitable infrastructure to support growth, and the availability of suitable sites.
- 7.4.2 Referring to the evidence base to define options is important to ensure that the alternatives identified and tested through the SA are robust, realistic and justified. Key pieces of evidence includes the Blaby Local Employment Land Study, the Housing and Economic Needs Assessment and the Strategic B8 Study. These provide an objective understanding of future needs, market demand and functional requirements (e.g. for logistics locations), which helps ensure that options are not arbitrary but reflect deliverable and strategic priorities.
- 7.4.3 Reflecting different interpretations of the evidence base and assumptions around future economic growth. Three reasonable alternatives have been identified, which vary in both the scale of provision and the spatial distribution of development, including the role of the PUA, settlements and strategic sites.
- 7.4.4 This approach enables a proportionate assessment of the sustainability implications of alternative growth trajectories, from a more constrained, baseline position through to a more market-led, logistics-focused scenario. The three options are introduced below, followed by a breakdown of each within table 7.4.

Option 1: Lower growth

Represents a baseline, scenario based on the Employment Land Study, meeting minimum identified needs with limited new allocations. Growth is primarily directed to the PUA and existing commitments, with no new strategic sites. The option tests a more constrained approach, limiting land take.

Option 2: Mid growth

Represents a more balanced growth strategy aligned with the HENA, increasing provision and introducing a wider range of allocations, including strategic sites (with limited delivery in the plan period). Development is more dispersed across the PUA and settlements.

Option 3: Higher growth

Represents a more ambitious, market-facing scenario, maintaining similar local provision to Option 2 but significantly increasing strategic warehousing, including large-scale allocations expected to come forward within the plan period. Growth is more concentrated at strategic locations.

Table 7.4: The reasonable alternatives for Employment Strategy

Option 1 Lower Growth	Option 2 Mid Growth	Option 3 Higher Growth
Requirements: <u>Local Employment Land</u> Total – Minimum/Around 22.9 hectares (91,600 sqm floorspace). (0 hectares office /R&D, 22.9 hectares / 91,600 sqm industrial and non-strategic warehousing)	Requirements: <u>Local Employment Land</u> Total – Minimum/Around 41.5 hectares (160,900 sqm floorspace). (6.8 hectares / 22,100 sqm office /R&D, 34.7 hectares / 138,800 sqm industrial and non-strategic warehousing)	Requirements: <u>Local Employment Land</u> Total – Minimum/Around 41.5 hectares (160,900 sqm floorspace). (11.4 hectares / 22,100 sqm office /R&D, 34.7 hectares / 138,800 sqm industrial and non-strategic warehousing)
<u>Strategic Warehousing Land</u> Road based - Total 30 hectares (105,100 sqm floorspace) (Committed site will meet this need) Rail based – there is an identified need for 650,000 sqm of rail based directed to Blaby District but the expectation is that this will need to come forward as a DCO not a Local Plan allocation or planning application.		
Site specifics Local Existing commitments = 14.5 hectares (45,100 sqm) Strategic B8 Warehousing Existing commitments total = 35.5 hectares: - Land West of St Johns, Enderby 30 hectares (105,100 sqm) - Land North of Leicester Lane 5.5 hectares (15,500 sqm)		
<u>Local proposed Allocations:</u> Land North of Glenfield 20 hectares (64,000 sqm) Total Local Employment Provision: 34.5 hectares (109,100 sqm) in Plan period No proposed allocations for strategic B8 warehousing. Total Strategic B8 Warehousing Provision 35.5 hectares (Developable area) in Plan period	<u>Local proposed Allocations:</u> - Land North of Glenfield 20 hectares (64,000 sqm) - Land West of Stoney Stanton 15 hectares total with 8 hectares (25,600 sqm) in plan period - Whetstone Pastures 15 hectares total with 8 hectares (25,600 sqm) in plan period - Land South of Whetstone 3 hectares (9,480 sqm) Total Local Employment Provision 53.5 hectares (169,780 sqm) in Plan period <u>Strategic B8 proposed Allocations:</u> - Land West of Stoney Stanton (Land South West of J2 of M69) 36 hectares (140,000 sqm) but none in Plan period Total Strategic B8 Warehousing Provision 35.5 hectares in Plan period.	<u>Local proposed Allocations:</u> - Land North of Glenfield 20 hectares (64,000 sqm) - Land West of Stoney Stanton 15 hectares total with 8 hectares (25,600 sqm) in plan period - Whetstone Pastures 15 hectares total with 8 hectares (25,600 sqm) in plan period - Land South of Whetstone 3 hectares (9,480 sqm) Total Local Employment Provision 53.5 hectares (169,780 sqm) in Plan period <u>Strategic B8 proposed Allocations:</u> - Land West of Stoney Stanton (Land South West of J2 of M69) 36 hectares (140,000 sqm) - Whetstone Pastures 80 hectares (280,000 sqm) Total Strategic B8 Warehousing Provision 151.5 hectares in Plan period

Summary of appraisal findings

	Option 1: Lower growth	Option 2: Mid growth	Option 3: Higher growth
Health: Facilities / accessibility	+	++?	++
Health: Amenity / safety	0	?	-
Population and housing	0	0	0
Biodiversity and Geodiversity	?	-	-
Cultural Heritage	?	-	--?
Waste	0	0	-
Minerals	0	?	?
Landscape	-	-	--?
Soil	-	-	--
Water quality	0	?	?
Air quality	?	-	-
Climate change: Mitigation	0	?	-
Flooding	0	0	0
Economy	+	++?	++
Congestion	0	?	-
Sustainable Travel	+	+	+

7.4.5 The findings show a clear relationship between the scale and distribution of employment growth and the magnitude of environmental, social and economic effects across the three options. In general, effects intensify as the quantum of employment land increases and as development moves from urban-edge and settlement-related locations toward larger, more strategic sites. None of the options presents significant constraints; however, each involves a different balance between economic ambition, environmental pressure and community impacts.

7.4.6 Option 1 involves only one site. Its proximity to Glenfield and the Leicester urban area supports strong accessibility, sustainable travel opportunities and moderate health and wellbeing benefits, while keeping impacts on landscape, biodiversity, heritage, transport networks and environmental quality limited and largely localised.

- 7.4.7 The key limitation of this option is its lower economic contribution, offering limited flexibility and reduced potential to accommodate longer-term market demand or strategic employment uses. This limits positive effects on socio economic factors to minor positives.
- 7.4.8 Option 2 provides a broader and more balanced growth strategy. By distributing employment land across several settlements and co-locating development with housing in some locations, this option delivers more widespread access to employment, stronger local health and wellbeing outcomes and an uplift in economic performance. While cumulative impacts on biodiversity, landscape, transport and water management are more negative than under Option 1, these effects are generally assessed as moderate or minor and capable of mitigation.
- 7.4.9 Option 3 delivers greater economic growth through the inclusion of large-scale strategic B8 sites, strengthening the district's role within the sub-regional and regional economy and providing capacity for significant job creation and inward investment. However, these benefits are accompanied by the greatest environmental and infrastructure pressures, particularly in relation to landscape character, agricultural land loss, traffic generation and emissions associated with logistics-led development. While many impacts could be mitigated through comprehensive masterplanning and infrastructure investment, this option carries a greater level of risk and reliance on effective mitigation.
- 7.4.10 In summary, Option 1 has the lowest environmental impact, but limits economic growth; Option 2 delivers a more balanced range of benefits with manageable impacts; and Option 3 maximises economic opportunity at the cost of increased environmental and infrastructure pressures. The relative merits of each option therefore depend on the weight afforded to economic ambition versus environmental capacity and local integration within the plan's overall objectives.

8. Site Options

8.1 Introduction

- 8.1.1 To deliver the new growth strategy, the Council consider it necessary to allocate additional sites for different land uses, including housing and employment.
- 8.1.2 To inform the selection of sites, the Council established a site selection methodology and invited landowners and other interested parties to submit sites that should be considered for allocation through the new Local Plan.
- 8.1.3 A key element of the site selection process involves the consideration of sustainability factors. The SA is a mechanism for demonstrating how sites perform against a framework of site appraisal criteria, helping to identify the constraints and merits of each site option. The SA has been integrated into the site selection process to reduce duplication of effort.
- 8.1.4 Working alongside the Council, AECOM devised a site appraisal framework, which takes the SA Objectives as a starting point and develops specific measurable criteria to test each site. Objective criteria are used as much as possible to ensure that sites are compared on a consistent basis. To avoid duplication of effort and ensure consistency, the findings relating to sites for certain criteria are drawn from existing studies such as the Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA).
- 8.1.5 Site assessments within the SA have been undertaken at two key stages of plan development. The process and outcomes at earlier stages are summarised below for context, followed by a discussion of the most up-to-date site assessments that have been undertaken prior to Regulation 19 consultation on a draft plan.

8.2 Summary of the options consultation stage

- 8.2.1 A list of reasonable site options was taken forward for assessment in the SA at the Options Consultation stage (derived from the SHELAA). The findings were set out in an Interim SA Report and helped to influence the emerging strategy and potential site allocations. The sites were categorised as follows:
 - 99 housing sites
 - 8 employment sites
 - 5 mixed use sites
- 8.2.2 The appraisal findings have not been replicated in this report as some of the sites are no longer reasonable alternatives for a variety of reasons:
 - No longer being promoted.
 - Have been granted planning permission or built out.

- Have been ruled out due to significant constraints.
- Not deliverable.

8.3 Pre-submission stage

- 8.3.1 At pre-submission stage, the Council identified the need to reappraise all sites submitted through the various Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) 'call for sites' to ensure that all promoted sites were subject to a consistent site appraisal. The decision to reappraise all sites was taken because a number of further sites had been submitted to the Council since the options consultation, and in the time between the initial appraisal of sites and further sites being submitted some of the environmental information used to assess the initial sites against local or national data had been updated, or new evidence had been collected. A reappraisal of all 164 sites submitted to the Council and promoted for development was therefore requested by the Council. This was undertaken following the close of the Council's SHELAA in Spring 2024.
- 8.3.2 These site assessments were then used by the Council to help understand the comparative performance of all submitted sites. The National and Local factors reviewed were considered in stage 1 of the Council's Site Selection process and further detail on how we have integrated the findings of the SA site appraisal work with our site selection process is outlined in the Council's Site Selection Report (SSR).
- 8.3.3 Appendix D sets out the site appraisal framework in detail. For each criteria, the data sources used are listed, as well as any assumptions made in determining scores.
- 8.3.4 The matrix presented at Appendix E illustrates a summary of the site assessment scores for all the site options, using a colour coding system to show where effects are likely to be negative or positive, and to what extent. These colours correspond to the criteria within the appraisal framework in Appendix D.

8.4 Rationale for proposed site allocations

- 8.4.1 The rationale for site selection is not based on a narrow consideration of sustainability. Site selection has also been influenced by other considerations including strategic factors and site-specific issues. This chapter sets out a summary of the site selection process, drawing out the key factors that have contributed to preferred sites across the different levels of the settlement hierarchy. A more comprehensive explanation is provided for individual sites within Appendix H of this document.
- 8.4.2 Rather than simply identifying sites with the fewest environmental or technical constraints, the process has centred on identifying those locations that align with the spatial strategy, support housing delivery, and enable sustainable patterns of development.

- 8.4.3 The need to secure a robust and deliverable supply of housing, particularly in the early part of the plan period, is also an important element of the strategy. Therefore, considerable weight is given to sites that are committed, or well advanced through the development management process. This is because there is a need to deliver growth quickly to address local housing needs that are not currently being met, and those sites that have been subject to scrutiny through the planning application process are likely to be well positioned to deliver homes early in the Plan period and therefore contribute towards housing delivery in the near term. Such sites will also help the Council to demonstrate that the plan can deliver a 5 year housing land supply at the point of adoption.
- 8.4.4 In the middle to latter part of the plan period, the Council is seeking to proactively direct growth in a way that supports longer-term sustainability outcomes, through the coordinated delivery of new infrastructure, improved accessibility, and reduced reliance on the private car.
- 8.4.5 This has led to a preference for sites that are not only deliverable, but which are also capable of forming part of a coherent spatial pattern of growth, particularly where they can contribute to wider urban extensions, infrastructure provision and opportunities for trip internalisation and a reduction in car usage. In this context, environmental and technical constraints—whilst clearly important—are generally treated as matters to be managed and mitigated, rather than as solely determining factors in their own right. Their relative weight in decision-making is therefore closely linked to the strategic role of the site.

Principal Urban Area (PUA)

- 8.4.6 Within the Principal Urban Area (PUA), the strategy seeks to direct a significant proportion of growth to the District's most accessible and well-connected locations, albeit reflecting historic delivery. The approach in this tier is characterised by a strong focus on integration with existing and committed development, particularly where sites form part of, or extend, established growth areas.
- 8.4.7 The preference is not for incremental or stand-alone sites, but for those that can reinforce and consolidate urban extensions, allowing for the coordinated delivery of infrastructure, services and active travel networks. Growth is directed to locations where it can be most effectively planned and delivered at scale, rather than dispersed across smaller, less connected parcels of land.
- 8.4.8 Smaller sites within the PUA, while in some cases accessible and capable of mitigation, are not allocated where they do not materially contribute to infrastructure provision, place-making, or sustainable transport objectives.

Conversely, larger sites that perform a clear strategic function are taken forward, even where they are subject to notable constraints, on the basis that these can be addressed through comprehensive masterplanning.

Larger villages

- 8.4.9 Across the larger villages, a more nuanced position emerges, reflecting both the variability in settlement roles and the significant influence of existing commitments. In several cases, a substantial proportion of anticipated growth is already embedded within the pipeline of permitted or emerging development, reducing the need for further allocations. This introduces a further dynamic: site selection is influenced not simply by the relative merits of individual sites, but by the extent to which additional growth is required in that location at all.
- 8.4.10 The consequence is that a number of sites are not allocated despite being broadly suitable in technical terms, as their inclusion would result in disproportionate levels of growth or would not materially improve the overall distribution of development. This reflects a recognition that the spatial strategy must respond to what is likely to be delivered, rather than operate in isolation from growth being delivered through the development management process.
- 8.4.11 At the same time, where additional allocations are made within this tier, there is a preference for sites that align with a defined direction of growth and contribute to a more cohesive pattern of development at the settlement level.
- 8.4.12 This is particularly evident where growth is focused in locations that can support infrastructure improvements, reinforce settlement form, or respond to locally established priorities, including those set out in Neighbourhood Plans.
- 8.4.13 Larger sites within the villages are justified not because they are unconstrained, but because they offer a scale and flexibility that enables constraints to be addressed more effectively, while also delivering wider benefits. By contrast, smaller or more peripheral sites—particularly those that are poorly related to the settlement edge or which would erode important gaps—are typically not taken forward, even where environmental constraints may be capable of mitigation.

Medium Villages

- 8.4.14 The approach to the medium villages is notably more restrained. These settlements are already subject to a considerable level of committed or emerging development, much of which has come forward in response to housing land supply pressures. As a result, the strategy largely seeks to consolidate existing growth, rather than introduce significant additional allocations.
- 8.4.15 This reflects an underlying judgement about the role these settlements play within the wider spatial structure. While they provide an important contribution to overall supply—particularly in terms of early delivery—their ability to support more sustainable patterns of development is more limited.
- 8.4.16 In particular, the scope to deliver new infrastructure or significantly reduce car dependency is constrained when compared to higher-tier settlements.

- 8.4.17 Consequently, the decision not to allocate further sites within many medium villages does not necessarily reflect an absence of suitable options, but rather a conclusion that additional growth would not materially advance the objectives of the spatial strategy, and may risk cumulative impacts on settlement character and infrastructure capacity.

Smaller Villages

- 8.4.18 In the smallest villages, the strategy adopts a clearly defined and restrictive approach. These settlements, by virtue of their scale, accessibility and limited service provision, are not considered appropriate locations for significant growth. The emphasis instead is on accommodating small-scale, locally appropriate development, which maintains the character and function of the settlement.
- 8.4.19 Larger sites in these locations are consistently rejected, not necessarily because they are incapable of development in technical terms, but because they would represent a scale of growth that is fundamentally at odds with the spatial strategy. In particular, such development would be unlikely to support sustainable travel patterns or deliver the facilities required to offset increased demand.

Summary

- 8.4.20 Taken together, the pattern of site selection across the District reflects a coherent application of the spatial strategy. The assessment process demonstrates that decisions have been driven partly by a comparison of environmental constraints, but also by a hierarchy of considerations centred on:
- Deliverability and timing
 - Strategic scale and infrastructure provision
 - Relationship to existing and committed growth
 - Potential to support more sustainable travel patterns
- 8.4.21 Environmental and technical constraints are part of this process, but their influence is context-dependent, with weight given to the overall contribution a site makes to the strategy. This gives rise to some areas of tension. Sites with similar constraints are treated differently depending on their strategic role; smaller sites are both relied upon and de-emphasised; and accessibility, while important, is not applied as a uniform determinant. In addition, the influence of existing commitments and locally derived policy priorities introduces a degree of variability in outcomes.
- 8.4.22 However, these are largely reflective of the need to balance competing objectives within the plan-making process. Overall, the approach represents a prioritisation of strategic growth, deliverability and long-term sustainability, recognising that the effectiveness of the Local Plan is determined not simply by the sites it includes, but by how those sites collectively function to shape patterns of growth across the District.

9. Appraisal of the Draft Plan

9.1 Introduction

- 9.1.1 This section presents an appraisal of the Pre Submission Version of the Plan (March, 2026) considered ‘as a whole’ (i.e. the proposed strategy including the site allocations and all the supporting policies that will shape future development).

9.2 Methods of appraisal

- 9.2.1 For each SA topic, the appraisal first considers the potential effects associated with the level and distribution of growth proposed in the draft Plan (i.e. the cumulative effects of proposed site allocations / spatial strategy). Next, consideration is given to all the supporting policies. This provides a more meaningful appraisal of the Plan, as the strategy / site allocations will be influenced by policy requirements.
- 9.2.2 The appraisals have been undertaken by qualified professionals in impact assessment and plan-making, employing the following methods:
- Drawing upon information within the Scoping Report in relation to baseline data, trends, sensitive environmental receptors and key sustainability issues.
 - Utilising Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to identify spatial features, environmentally sensitive areas and relationships between development locations and likely effects.
 - Building upon appraisals undertaken at previous stages of plan making where relevant.
 - Cross referencing information from supporting pieces of evidence such as landscape character studies and transport modelling
- 9.2.3 In any appraisal, every effort is made to predict effects accurately, however it is recognised that this is inherently challenging.
- 9.2.4 To determine the significance of effects, account is taken of a range of factors including magnitude, duration, frequency, likelihood, permanence, and timescale. The potential for cumulative and synergistic effects is also considered by taking account of how the different proposals within the Plan interact. Consideration is also given to the interaction of the Plan with other plans, policies and programmes that affect the baseline position.
- 9.2.5 Each Plan policy has been considered in the appraisal, but the findings have been discussed on a ‘whole plan’ basis (rather than commenting on every policy individually in the plan appraisal narrative set out in this section). This is important as policies should be read in the context of the whole Plan and not in isolation. Policies can interact with one another to create cumulative effects, synergistic effects and to help mitigate potential negative effects.

- 9.2.6 Where this is the case, such factors are discussed in the appraisal findings, including reference to individual policies as relevant.
- 9.2.7 Secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects have been considered for each topic as part of the assessment process. These are drawn out in the appraisal text as relevant. As discussed above, it is not necessary to comment on the characteristics of effects for every element of the Plan individually. It can be assumed that where effects have not been identified within the appraisal text for certain policies, that these were not important factors in determining overall significance.

9.3 Population and Housing

Appraisal of the Spatial Strategy

- 9.3.1 The spatial strategy broadly aligns with 'Option 2' of the housing strategy alternatives and Option 2' of the employment strategy alternatives¹⁷. The effects are discussed in detail in Appendixes F and G.
- 9.3.2 The key issues are reproduced in summary form in this section, concentrating on any minor changes to site allocations and the additional context that the plan policies provide in relation to delivering the strategy.
- 9.3.3 The housing strategy is considered likely to lead to likely significant positive effects as it delivers a level of growth which exceeds the identified need calculated using the standard method and accounts for needs generated in Leicester.
- 9.3.4 The range of sites and strategy seeks to address needs for affordable housing and specialist housing (e.g. adaptable homes for older people and people with disabilities), as well as pitches for gypsies, travellers, and travelling showpeople.
- 9.3.5 The strategy includes a mix of small, medium and large sites across a range of settlements, which provides choice and a realistic prospect of delivering homes across the plan period. The inclusion of two strategic standalone communities will also contribute housing towards the end and beyond the plan period.
- 9.3.6 The inclusion of employment alongside housing has the potential to support local population needs and provide opportunities for people to live closer to where they work. However, it is not anticipated that the increase in employment land provision would drive significant changes in population or housing demand locally over the plan-period.

¹⁷ Since the appraisal of spatial options, several sites that were not included within Strategic Housing Option 2 have since received planning permission, started to be built out etc. Therefore, these sites now form part of the committed supply position, and the final position within the draft Plan does not correspond perfectly with option 2. However, the total housing numbers and distribution of growth remains broadly the same.

Additional implications

9.3.6 The housing chapter contains a suite of thematic policies that are of direct relevance to this topic and these are summarised below. The policies deal with affordable housing, mix and density, specialist and accessible accommodation, self and custom build housing and accommodation for gypsies and travellers and travelling showpeople:

- Policy H2: Affordable Housing. Requires 25% of sites of 10 dwellings or more to be affordable and makes further provision for rural exception sites and cross subsidy sites in the districts villages to address needs in communities where development may not always be delivered by the provision of market homes.
- Policy H3: Housing Mix and Density: Sets out the appropriate mix of homes across different tenures on sites of ten homes or more as well as policies to maximise densities and therefore ensure the efficient use of land.
- Policy H4: Specialist and Accessible Accommodation: set outs specific requirements for the largest sites (Policies S7, S8 and S10) to deliver specific on site older peoples provision on larger strategic sites of 800 homes or more in the plan period, and for remaining strategic sites to deliver 5% of the sites housing to meet the needs of older people or those with other specialist needs. This policy also sets out a requirement in respect of all sites (strategic and non-strategic housing sites) of ten or more homes to make provision for 40% of all homes to be built to M4(2) (accessible and adaptable) standard, and a minimum of 3% of all dwellings on sites of ten or more homes to be built to M4(3) (wheelchair accessible homes). This policy also encourages developers to build homes that meet nationally described space standards though does not require this.
- Policy H5: Self and Custom Build Housing requires that where no specific requirement is outlined for self and custom build provision 5% of all dwellings plots on site should be made available for self or custom builders.
- Policy S14 addresses Accommodation for Gypsies and Traveller and Travelling Show Person and sets out a criteria-based policy to enable the provision of further sites throughout the plan period.

9.3.7 These policies are all influenced by local evidence studies which demonstrate different needs that need to be addressed in new homes. Therefore, it is likely that new homes across all allocations will be tailored to the needs of local communities in the short and longer term. Where standards and requirements are introduced that will add to development costs, these have been viability tested and there is flexibility in the policy wording to ensure that market homes can be delivered on individual projects should there be site specific issues.

9.3.8 The strategic housing allocations are each accompanied by a policy which set out important issues that need to be addressed. Typically, such stipulations can add costs to developments, which can affect viability and deliverability. However, the requirements are not unreasonable and are unlikely to have significant effects in this regard.

9.3.9 Several site-specific policies are of relevance to the Population and Housing topic and are discussed below.

- Policy S6: Comprehensive Development and Masterplanning of Strategic Sites
- Policies S7 – S12: These set out the requirements for strategic sites as follows:
 - S7 Land West of Stoney Stanton
 - S8 Whetstone Pastures
 - S9 Land to the North of the A47, Hinckley Road, Kirby Muxloe
 - S10 Land West of Beggars Lane, Lubbethorpe,
 - S11 Land at Carlton Park, Narborough
 - S12 Land South of Whetstone
- In particular larger site policies add detail with regards to housing types, mix, affordability, and density.
- Policies for West of Stoney Stanton and Whetstone Pastures require specific provision for gypsy and traveller plots, self-build and custom build plots as well as provision for older people or those with accessibility needs. This will help to ensure that specialist provision is delivered in sustainable new communities.
- Land North of the A47, Kirby Muxloe (Policy S9) and Land South of Whetstone also include a requirement for the provision of self-build properties, whilst Policy S10 requires the provision of older people's accommodation.

9.3.10 In addition to strategic Housing Policies the Plan includes a further 18 Sites (H1A-H1R) small (non-strategic housing sites) which contribute to the Council's Housing Delivery. The specific housing requirements applied to these sites are set out in the Council's thematic housing policies referenced above, but will help to ensure that all new sites contribute towards identified housing needs.

9.3.11 Strategic policies S16 (Green Wedges)S17 (Areas of Separation) and S18 (Countryside) are all likely to place restrictions on housing growth outside of settlement boundaries.

- 9.3.12 Whilst this could have some implications for longer term housing delivery, this is largely a continuation of the current approach and does not affect the ability to meet housing needs within this current plan period. In addition, as noted previously Policy H2 does provide some flexibility for the delivery of affordable and cross subsidy homes in the District's villages. Therefore, neutral effects are predicted in this respect.
- 9.3.13 With regards to 'thematic' policies in the plan that seek to protect and enhance environmental assets, these will all contribute positively to the creation of higher quality housing. The key tension is whether this then affects delivery of homes. Requirements for green and blue infrastructure, urban greening factor, landscaping and heritage protection are broadly in line with national policy and do not introduce unreasonable or excessive local standards. Furthermore, there is reference to viability being an important factor. Therefore, it is considered unlikely that these policies would have any significant negative effect upon housing delivery.
- 9.3.14 Likewise, plan policies that support the provision of healthy and safe communities or contributions towards social and physical infrastructure improvements, will lead to the creation of more sustainable communities in the longer term.
- 9.3.15 The key tension is the burden that this puts onto housing developments and whether delivery could be slowed down or deterred as a result. Considering the proposed policies, there are not unreasonable or excessive local standards introduced, and viability is referenced as an exceptional circumstance. Therefore, significant negative effects upon housing delivery would not be expected. Where the policies introduce the requirement for additional evidence and assessment to support planning applications (for example health impact assessments and construction management plans), this is proportionate to the type and scale of development involved.

Overall effects

- 9.3.16 The spatial strategy delivers housing above identified needs, including Leicester's unmet demand, through a mix of sites and two strategic communities for long-term growth. Policies support affordable, specialist, and custom-build housing, informed by local evidence, with viability safeguards to maintain deliverability. Strategic site policies add detail on housing mix and specialist provision without imposing unreasonable burdens. Environmental and thematic policies enhance quality and sustainability, while infrastructure and community policies are proportionate and unlikely to hinder delivery. Overall, the strategy is expected to have **significant positive effects** on meeting housing needs and creating sustainable communities, with no major viability risks.

9.4 Health and wellbeing

Appraisal of the Spatial Strategy

- 9.4.1 A feature of the Plan is the expectation that the two new strategic growth sites at Land West of Stoney Stanton and Whetstone Pastures will provide new healthcare facilities directly on-site, rather than relying only on financial contributions to expand existing services. This marks a departure from the current Local Plan and aligns the district with good practice approaches to planning for health infrastructure in new communities. By requiring new GP surgeries and enabling the expansion of existing primary care facilities through developer funding, the Plan seeks to address one of the most persistent community concerns: the strain on primary healthcare capacity.
- 9.4.2 The locational strategy ensures new communities can access existing healthcare by ensuring growth is directed to sustainable locations close to existing local centres and are designed to be walkable, placing them close to homes, schools, shops and community spaces. In the case of the two new settlements new healthcare provision is proposed on site.
- 9.4.3 This supports more equitable access to care, particularly for those with limited mobility, without access to private vehicles, or living with long-term conditions that are sensitive to travel barriers. The creation of walkable neighbourhoods contributes to ensuring that daily needs (including healthcare) can be met locally, reducing car dependency and improving the likelihood of early and preventive care.
- 9.4.4 Nevertheless, it is recognised that the early phases of development may place additional pressure on existing GP practices before new facilities become fully operational. Such transitional impacts are typical of large-scale growth and will need careful coordination with healthcare providers. However, these pressures are expected to be temporary.
- 9.4.5 The Plan introduces a significant level of planned green and blue infrastructure provision in Blaby. The proposed Strategic and non-strategic sites are required to deliver significant amounts of greenspace (in some case up to 50%), incorporating parks, natural habitats, green corridors, sports facilities, children's play areas, youth spaces, allotments and private garden space. This level of provision surpasses existing local standards and will provide wide-ranging benefits for physical and mental health.
- 9.4.6 Large, connected green spaces encourage physical activity, reduce stress, and promote social cohesion by offering attractive and safe places for recreation and interaction. The integration of blue infrastructure and natural flood management enhances resilience to climate impacts while also improving biodiversity and creating natural environments for residents. Taken together, these requirements have the potential to deliver substantial health gains.

- 9.4.7 Housing is one of the strongest determinants of health. The Plan adopts a more specific and inclusive approach to housing provision than the current plan. It mandates a minimum of 25% affordable housing on strategic sites, requires compliance with accessible housing standards (including M4(2) and M4(3)), and introduces policy provisions for older people's housing, bungalows, wheelchair-adaptable homes and specialist accommodation.
- 9.4.8 These measures help ensure that housing is suitable across different life stages and for those with mobility or sensory impairments. They directly support healthy ageing by enabling people to remain in their homes for longer. The inclusion of self- and custom-build plots and dedicated Gypsy and Traveller accommodation further broadens the district's housing offer and enhances social inclusion. By expanding the supply of affordable and accessible homes, the Plan also makes an important contribution to reducing health inequalities.
- 9.4.9 The Plan includes allocations for employment land and emphasises the importance of locating jobs close to where people live. This approach improves economic security, reduces the cost of travel to work, and supports a healthier work–life balance.
- 9.4.10 Economic stability is strongly correlated with better health outcomes, and the Plan's employment strategy therefore represents a positive determinant of long-term health.
- 9.4.11 The Plan requires new primary and secondary schools, community centres, cultural spaces and local shops to be embedded within new neighbourhoods. These facilities support strong social networks and reduce isolation by providing places for people to meet, learn, participate in cultural activity and access essentials without long journeys.
- 9.4.12 Community cohesion, civic engagement and feelings of belonging are all important determinants of wellbeing, and the Plan's approach seeks to combat car-dependent patterns of growth that have characterised previous decades.
- 9.4.13 Although the overarching direction of the Plan is positive for health outcomes, several potential adverse effects require consideration and mitigation. Some of these are inherent to large-scale development, while others reflect the concerns raised through community engagement.
- 9.4.14 The most significant risks relate to short-term pressures on healthcare and school capacity. Until new GP surgeries and schools are delivered, existing facilities may experience increased demand. The Plan requires early phasing of key infrastructure, but the sequencing of development will be critical to minimising temporary gaps in provision.
- 9.4.15 In transport terms, the early stages of development may increase congestion, noise and air pollution before the full network of active and sustainable transport infrastructure is in place.

- 9.4.16 The Plan's strong emphasis on walking, cycling and public transport—supported by mobility hubs and high-quality strategic connections—should reduce car dependency in the medium to long term. However, interim impacts on amenity are likely during construction and early occupation.
- 9.4.17 Construction activity itself presents another source of potential negative health effects, including noise, dust, vibration, heavy vehicle movements and disruption to everyday life. These impacts can be particularly concerning for communities. Detailed Construction Environmental Management Plans (CEMPs), required by policy, will be essential in ensuring that such impacts are controlled and minimised.
- 9.4.18 The transformation of land around villages into new settlements will also result in a permanent loss of open countryside. While large areas of new greenspace will be created in some areas, the change in landscape character and reduced access to informal rural walking routes may be perceived as a loss of amenity by existing communities.
- 9.4.19 Some residents are also likely to have concerns about air quality, the cost of living, energy efficiency and the risk of fuel poverty. The Plan responds by making provision for new energy-efficient homes, reducing reliance on car travel through the provision of walkable neighbourhoods and supporting improvements to active travel infrastructure, and enhancing access to local services, which can collectively reduce household costs and improve resilience.

Additional Implications

- 9.4.20 In addition to the impacts associated with the spatial strategy and allocations, a range of other plan policies combine to bring about positive synergistic effects upon health and wellbeing (for both planned development and ad hoc developments).
- 9.4.21 Collectively, the housing policies are likely to have significant positive effects on health, as suitable accommodation is a critical component of long term health. Some important measures of note are as follows:
- 25% affordable housing minimum at strategic sites
 - Accessible housing (M4(2) and M4(3) thresholds)
 - 5% homes for older people on the largest sites
 - Self and custom build allocation.
 - Gypsy/Traveller provision
- 9.4.22 Together, these policies are likely to allow more vulnerable groups to gain access to suitable housing, and the provision of greater choice and affordability that can reduce health inequalities.

- 9.4.23 Policy S6: Comprehensive Development and Masterplanning seeks to ensure that new large developments deliver schools, GP facilities, community hubs and mixed-use, walkable neighbourhoods.
- 9.4.24 Policy HW1: Healthy Communities requires development to promote active, healthy, safe and inclusive communities, protect residents from pollution, improve air quality, and ensure access to facilities that support wellbeing.
- 9.4.25 Open Space, Sport and Recreation (HW2), Mandates provision of parks, natural greenspace, children's play, youth play, allotments and sports pitches using quantified standards per 1,000 residents. These standards directly support physical activity, mental wellbeing and social interaction.
- 9.4.26 Air Quality (HW4) : Requires development to avoid worsening air quality, mandates assessments for major schemes, and focuses on protecting AQMAs. This directly supports respiratory and cardiovascular health and reduces environmental inequality.
- 9.4.27 Policy S15: Design and Place-making. Requires well designed, resilient and inclusive places that encourage walking, social interaction, safety, surveillance, and access to green space. Designing for health is embedded through walkable neighbourhoods and safe public spaces.
- 9.4.28 ENV2: Green and Blue Infrastructure requires the provision of strategic green and blue infrastructure networks, biodiversity net gain, green corridors and natural flood management. Strategic sites must provide significant greenspace, delivering major improvements in access to nature, climate resilience, and mental health.

Overall effects

- 9.4.29 Across its policies, allocations and spatial strategy, the Local Plan offers a comprehensive and forward-looking framework for promoting health and wellbeing. It directly addresses the structural determinants of health—ranging from housing and access to healthcare to green space provision, economic security and transport.
- 9.4.30 While negative effects related to construction, early service capacity and localised impacts on amenity are anticipated, these are largely temporary, manageable and proportionate to the scale of development. They are also considerably outweighed by the long-term benefits, which are substantial, district-wide and structurally embedded in the Plan's policies.
- 9.4.31 On balance, the Plan is expected to deliver **significant positive effects** upon health and wellbeing in Blaby. However, short term **minor negative effects** are predicted alongside these to reflect the issues discussed above.

9.5 Biodiversity and geodiversity

Appraisal of the Spatial Strategy

- 9.5.1 The growth strategy is anticipated to lead to increased cumulative pressures on ecological networks and habitat connectivity. While much of Blaby remains relatively unconstrained in relation to this aspect, development within proximity to specific sites has the potential to result in localised issues pre-mitigation.
- 9.5.2 Whilst the majority of housing or mixed use allocations are a significant distance from SSSIs, several allocations lie in proximity to SSSIs, including those associated with Croft and Huncote Quarry, Croft Pasture, Narborough Bog and Burbage Wood and Aston Firs. In particular, land south of Narborough Road presents a risk of adverse effects on Croft and Huncote Quarry SSSI through indirect pathways such as dust, noise, pollution and hydrological change. Other nearby sites may similarly increase recreational pressure or affect water quality and flow. Early engagement with Natural England highlights the need for enhanced SuDS, water treatment and measures to manage visitor pressure.
- 9.5.3 At the local scale, potential indirect effects on designated sites such as Goss Meadows LNR will need to be addressed through careful design, including the control of lighting, noise and access. The presence of priority habitats is generally limited across the site portfolio, although there are notable constraints at specific locations. For example, land north of The Home Farm contains semi-improved grassland and lowland fen habitats of high ecological value, requiring retention and buffering.
- 9.5.4 Elsewhere, smaller areas of woodland provide opportunities to strengthen green corridors and ecological connectivity.
- 9.5.5 The overall scale of growth introduces potential cumulative effects on designated sites, priority habitats and the wider ecological network. Particular attention is required for land at Western Park Golf Course, which adjoins Kirby Firth LNR. While development is limited to access infrastructure, there remains potential for indirect effects, including disturbance and increased recreational pressure.
- 9.5.6 More generally, the redevelopment of the former golf course sites highlights the need to balance existing ecological value with opportunities for enhancement. Such sites can support urban biodiversity but also offer scope for habitat creation and improved connectivity where brought forward as part of a coordinated, landscape-led approach.
- 9.5.7 Overall, the draft Plan approach provides a clear opportunity to deliver BNG and strengthen ecological networks at a district scale. Nevertheless, the proximity of some allocations to sensitive receptors and the cumulative effects of growth introduce risks of localised impact.

- 9.5.8 With regards to proposed employment sites, there is some overlap with Local Wildlife sites, as well as features such as hedgerows, trees, and watercourses indicating a moderate local biodiversity value, with potential impacts arising from habitat loss, fragmentation and disturbance associated with employment uses. The cumulative effect of development across multiple sites increases the risk of incremental loss of locally important habitats.
- 9.5.9 The initial employment site proposed at North of Glenfield, is located close to, or adjoining, Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs), such as 'Groby Glenfield Parish Boundary Hedgerow' and is in close proximity to others such as 'Rothley Brook', as well as Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) especially along the north boundary of the site. These features suggest that the site has existing biodiversity value at a local level, particularly in terms of linear habitats and connectivity. Employment development has potential to affect these features if not sensitively designed, particularly through land take and increased disturbance. However, the Plan recognises these issues, and the site area has been modified to exclude the LWS.
- 9.5.10 There is potential to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) onsite through retention and enhancement of existing trees and hedgerows, alongside the creation of new green infrastructure within the site. Indeed, the site policy recognises the need to retain such linear features.
- 9.5.11 The Whetstone Pastures site (mixed use) contains a number of LWS, notably the Dismantled Railway & Whetstone Gorse, as well as Willoughby Waterleys Meadow, and others including mature trees. Given the large scale of the site, it should be possible to avoid and mitigate significant negative biodiversity effects.
- 9.5.12 Indeed, the site policy states that key features will need to be retained and enhanced, and acknowledges that the site presents an opportunity for strategic BNG. There is also support for flood management using natural solutions, which will be more likely to support biodiversity compared to hard engineered solutions.
- 9.5.13 Despite the localised challenges discussed above, the overall scale of development proposed through the strategy is large enough to provide significant opportunities for a landscape-scale approach to environmental enhancement. The strategic sites in particular offer opportunities to implement significant areas of green and blue infrastructure enhancement, which should help to attract positive effects in the longer term with regards to biodiversity.

Additional implications

- 9.5.14 Policy S6: 'Comprehensive Development and Masterplanning of Strategic Sites' requires strategic masterplans to create an accessible, high quality, multi-functional green and blue infrastructure network that reflects locally identified opportunities in the Leicestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

- 9.5.15 The policy also requires development to include green and blue infrastructure that identifies the scale, distribution, type and design of the biodiversity net gain it will bring forward. This is considered a benefit for biodiversity and geodiversity by ensuring that larger scale development fully appreciates and reflects local biodiversity and geodiversity importance through design and seeks to enhance it where appropriate.
- 9.5.16 Biodiversity in development design is further considered through Policy S15: 'Design and Place-making', which seeks to ensure new development enhances the surrounding physical environment.
- 9.5.17 This includes encouraging development to enhance local biodiversity, fully regarding the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. This could incorporate measures such as bird safe glass, hedgehog highways, bird and bat boxes, and swales and permanently wet attenuation basins. Biodiversity in development design is also considered through Policy H3: 'Housing Mix and Density', which outlines support for lower densities where development would come forward within proximity to biodiversity constraints. Both of these policies work to support biodiversity and geodiversity by reducing the potential for adverse effects on biodiversity value.
- 9.5.18 It is noted that where there are local issues in relation to biodiversity and geodiversity (as discussed above), the specific site allocation policies make appropriate provisions. For example:
- Strategic Development Site – Whetstone Pastures includes the need for development design to include informal open space for habitat creation. Additionally, key ecological features will be retained where practicable; and a habitat management and monitoring plan will be required to be submitted alongside the planning application. A large amount of greenspace will be required on site, which offers potential for net gain.
 - Strategic Development Site – Land South of Whetstone Strategic Site indicates development will need to be sensitively designed in relation to the Whetstone Brook Local Wildlife Site.
 - Strategic Development Site – Land West of Stoney Stanton requires development to be sensitively designed in relation to the SSSI in proximity, and ecological features will need to be retained through the development (including local wildlife sites).
 - Strategic Development Site – Land to the North of the A47 Hinckley Road, Kirby Muxloe Strategic Site [Hastings Fields Phase 2] sets out the requirement for development to retain the Oaks Farm Stream and Woodland candidate Local Wildlife site.

- Many of the site allocation policies also include the need for green and blue infrastructure to be integrated into the development design proposal for the site, in line with the Leicestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Additionally, a number of strategic development site policies require development proposals to retain important non-designated ecological features, including (but not limited to) existing trees and hedgerows, as well as including stipulations in relation to planting new vegetation.
 - Several of the strategic development site policies also require the submission of different supportive plans alongside planning applications. This includes Construction and Environment Management Plans (CEMPs), Biodiversity Enhancement Management Plans (BEMPs), Habitat Management and Monitoring Plans (HMMPs) and / or Landscape Ecology Management Plans (LEMPs). It is anticipated that through these specific policy provisions, the potential for negative effects on biodiversity and geodiversity arising from development is reduced.
- 9.5.19 The ‘Conserving and Enhancing the Natural and Historic Environment’ chapter contains numerous policies that are directly applicable to the biodiversity and geodiversity topic. Policy ENV1: ‘Biodiversity and Geodiversity’ is the main policy linked to this topic – which seeks to protect and improve biodiversity and geodiversity in Blaby as far as is possible and appropriate. This includes ensuring development adequately and proportionately mitigates adverse impacts where they are unavoidable – with financial compensation being a final resort. The policy also outlines that development leading to adverse effects on SSSIs will be refused unless its associated benefits clearly outweigh the effect it would have on the designation or within the wider SSSI network.
- 9.5.20 Furthermore, the policy indicates that other designations in Blaby, including Regionally Important Geological Sites, will be protected and enhanced where appropriate. The policy also includes the need to achieve biodiversity and geodiversity improvements. As such, it is considered likely that positive effects will come forward in relation to biodiversity and geodiversity, given the focus on protecting and enhancing important designations and value.
- 9.5.21 The remaining policies within the Conserving and Enhancing the Natural and Historic Environment chapter also contribute towards biodiversity and geodiversity. Policy ENV2 ‘Green and Blue Infrastructure’ seeks to protect and enhance the green and blue infrastructure network across Blaby, and deliver biodiversity net gain and support ecosystem services. Additionally, Policy ENV3 ‘Trees and Hedgerows’ outlines protection for existing trees and hedgerows and the increased planting levels associated with new development. These policies are anticipated to have a positive effect in relation to biodiversity and geodiversity through protecting and enhancing the biodiversity network in Blaby. This is anticipated to help maintain and improve biodiversity connectivity and value, as important features and areas will maintain their contribution to the network, and new features and areas have the potential to support increased species movement.

- 9.5.22 Wider plan policies are also anticipated to have an impact on biodiversity and geodiversity. This is largely through the creation of green and blue infrastructure, which is likely to include areas of habitat coverage. Additionally, green and blue infrastructure is anticipated to contribute towards biodiversity connectivity by acting as corridors between important habitats and designations – allowing for safe species movement.
- 9.5.23 Furthermore, development through the wider plan policies is required to deliver biodiversity net gains or biodiversity improvements. For example, this includes through the delivery of sustainable urban drainage systems or other flood management opportunities (Policy CC2 ‘Flood Risk’, and CC3 Policy ‘Water Quality, Supply and Wastewater’).

Overall effects

- 9.5.24 In conclusion, while the anticipated growth in Blaby is expected to increase cumulative pressure on ecological networks and some sensitive areas, the proposed strategy utilises the scale of development to implement a landscape-scale approach to environmental enhancement. By prioritising the protection and improvement of biodiversity and geodiversity through overarching development policies and site-specific allocation policies, the plan, together with wider legislative requirements to secure a biodiversity net gain on development sites will ensure that any adverse effects are adequately addressed and achieve biodiversity and geodiversity benefits – including biodiversity net gain in the longer term.
- 9.5.25 Furthermore, the integration of specific biodiversity and geodiversity focused policies helps to promote multi-functional green and blue infrastructure and biodiversity-sensitive design measures across Blaby, which is anticipated to contribute towards maintaining vital habitat connectivity and supporting species protection and movement.
- 9.5.26 Ultimately, through the combination of protective and enhancing policies, overarching development policies, and site-specific stipulations, the strategy is anticipated to result in a **minor positive effect** on Blaby’s biodiversity and geodiversity in the long term.
- 9.5.27 However, it is likely that short term **minor negative effects** will arise as a result of construction phases (and before net gain schemes are mature).

9.6 Cultural heritage

Appraisal of the Spatial Strategy

- 9.6.1 The strategy involves residential and employment land development in proximity to designated and non-designated heritage assets, areas, and features. This includes listed buildings (such as the Grade II listed Whetstone Pastures Residential Home), scheduled monuments (such as Sapcote Castle and Moat), conservation areas (such as the Willoughby Waterleys Conservation Area), and non-designated local historic environment records.

- 9.6.2 As such, growth has the potential to bring forward risks to both the physical fabric and the setting of these assets, both of which could have an influence over significance.
- 9.6.3 Whilst most development sites are not directly constrained by designated heritage assets, a number lie close to listed buildings, scheduled monuments, and conservation areas.
- 9.6.4 Several sites are also characterised by historic features such as field patterns, ridge and furrow and potential for archaeology. Where the potential for effects exists the accompanying site policies require consideration of the measures needed to mitigate impacts on heritage.
- 9.6.5 More notable heritage sensitivity relates to the strategic allocation at Whetstone Pastures, which contains a Grade II listed building within its boundary and lies directly beside a conservation area. Development (both housing and employment) here will require careful, heritage-led design to ensure that the setting of the listed building and the character of the conservation area are protected. The accompanying policy requires heritage and archaeological assessments to be prepared and also strong landscaped edges to protect the character of settlements.
- 9.6.6 Several other sites also fall within 200–400 metres of scheduled monuments such as land south of Hinckley Road in Sapcote, or Grade II* and Grade II listed buildings. Although direct physical harm is unlikely as a result of the development of proposed sites (although there is a risk of loss of below ground archaeology linked to the Scheduled Monument in the Hinckley Road, Sapcote site). However, for most sites close to heritage assets development could still alter views, visual character, and site context. These effects are likely to be capable of some mitigation but will require detailed assessments, sensitive layouts, and appropriate landscaping to maintain local distinctiveness. Several site policies refer to the need to respect designated and non-designated heritage assets, including the need to undertake a detailed heritage assessment.
- 9.6.7 Most of the predicted effects relate to changes in setting rather than direct loss or alteration of heritage assets. These can generally be minimised through mitigation measures such as landscape buffers, design, sympathetic materials, and the retention of historic features. Importantly, the scale of development also creates opportunities to enhance local historic character, integrate heritage features into green infrastructure, and improve public access to cultural assets where appropriate.
- 9.6.8 Employment on land north of Glenfield is within approximately 65m to a Scheduled Monument, the moated site and garden enclosure at Glenfield and Conservation Area.
- 9.6.9 There are several listed buildings in the surrounding area, including Grade II listed buildings within Glenfield, although no listed buildings are located within the site itself.

- 9.6.10 Given the site's relationship with existing urban development, the historic environment in this location is already influenced by modern land uses, which limits the sensitivity of the wider setting. It is anticipated that there is potential for minor negative effects on cultural heritage due to potential impacts on nearby heritage assets, however no direct impacts or loss of designated assets are likely.
- 9.6.11 The overall scale of growth, particularly in relation to potential greenfield and edge-of-settlement development, increases the likelihood of encountering previously unrecorded archaeological remains, and may lead to cumulative impacts on the area's historic character.
- 9.6.12 Overall, the combined effects are predicted to be **minor negative**, driven mainly by potential impacts on the setting of heritage assets rather than direct harm. With appropriate assessment and design (as required by thematic and site-specific policies in the Plan), the effects should be possible to manage to avoid significant harm.

Additional implications

- 9.6.13 Policy S6 Comprehensive Development and Masterplanning of Strategic Sites requires strategic masterplans to be informed by a technical and design evidence base – including an Urban Design Framework and design principles, in order to identify how a site protects and enhances heritage assets. This is anticipated to help further mitigate any adverse impacts on heritage assets, areas and features, through ensuring that strategic development does not detract from their historic significance.
- 9.6.14 Additionally, several strategic development site policies require development proposals to consider the impacts and mitigation required to address potential impacts on specific heritage assets (both designated and non-designated). Through these measures it is anticipated that impacts to heritage within site boundaries, and within proximity, will be appropriately mitigated.
- 9.6.15 The 'Conserving and Enhancing the Natural and Historic Environment' chapter contains a suite of policies that are directly applicable to the cultural heritage topic.
- 9.6.16 Specifically, Policy ENV5 'Heritage and Culture' works to ensure that the historic environment of Blaby is maintained and enhanced through development. The policy outlines that the Council is taking a positive approach in relation to the conservation of heritage assets, including (but not limited to) through ensuring new development makes a positive contribution to the character and distinctiveness of the area, avoids harm to designated heritage assets, and promotes heritage assets as tourism opportunities where appropriate. As such, it is considered likely that positive effects will come forward through development in relation to cultural heritage, given that the protection of important assets (both designated and non-designated) is a focus of the Council.

- 9.6.17 The remaining policies within the 'Conserving and Enhancing the Natural and Historic Environment' chapter also contribute towards cultural heritage. For example, Policy ENV2 'Green and Blue Infrastructure' seeks to protect and enhance the green and blue infrastructure network across Blaby; Policy ENV3 'Trees and Hedgerows' outlines protection for existing trees and hedgerows including those valued for their historic value and the increased planting levels associated with new development; and ENV4 Policy 'Landscape and Settlement Character' seeks to protect the individual character and setting of each settlement in Blaby.
- 9.6.18 These policies are anticipated to have a positive effect in relation to cultural heritage through maintaining and enhancing the settings of specific heritage assets and the wider historic landscape. This is further anticipated to preserve the historic significance of these assets.
- 9.6.19 Wider plan policies are also anticipated to have an effect on cultural heritage. Policy H3 'Housing Mix and Density' indicates that lower housing densities will be accepted where the development site has associated heritage issues, or is within proximity to heritage constraints. Additionally, Policy R6 'Supporting Sustainable Tourism, Leisure and Visitor Development' indicates that development proposals for new tourist and visitor facilities will be expected to deliver heritage conservation benefits (where appropriate). This demonstrates that cultural heritage is important within Blaby, and that development needs to maintain and enhance heritage assets, their setting and their significance as far as possible.

Overall effects

- 9.6.20 In conclusion, the spatial strategy proposed for Blaby recognises that large-scale growth has the potential to result in minor negative effects on the physical fabric and setting of cultural heritage. However, these risks are considered to be addressed through the policy framework, which works to mitigate the potential for adverse effects. This is achieved through requiring development design proposals to be informed by technical design evidence, and the inclusion of site-specific stipulations within site allocation policies (for example, outlining the need for heritage and archaeological assessments and CEMPs to manage construction).
- 9.6.21 Furthermore, the integration of the wider plan policies, including the protection and enhancement of green and blue infrastructure, is anticipated to contribute towards maintaining and enhancing cultural heritage through helping to protect and enhance historic settings.
- 9.6.22 By prioritising the conservation and promotion of heritage assets, areas and features (designated and non-designated), the Plan is likely to facilitate some improvements to the setting of heritage in parts of the district. This helps to offset the residual negative effects that are inevitable in other locations that are subject to development. On balance, a **neutral effect** is predicted overall.

9.7 Waste

Appraisal of the Spatial Strategy

- 9.7.1 Waste generation is an inevitable consequence of growth and is relevant to every stage of the development lifecycle, including design, construction, operation, and eventually demolition or reuse. At the operation stage this includes the storage, collection, and disposal of household waste.
- 9.7.2 The management of waste, including minimisation, re-use, recycling, and recovery, is governed by national policy and legislation and is implemented at the site-level through planning conditions and developer waste strategies, which are considered during the masterplanning stage of development. Due to this, significant negative effects are unlikely to arise as a result of the Local Plan. In this context, it is reasonable to assume that the level of waste generated will correspond to the quantum of development. A greater number of households is also likely to generate more waste compared to the same population being housed in fewer homes. The same is also generally true for larger homes versus smaller homes provided that recycling facilities are equal.
- 9.7.3 Focusing on waste generated during the operation stage of development, the smaller sites in proximity to existing settlements will likely be included in existing (or expanded) waste collection rounds for these settlements. However, for the larger strategic sites (Land West of Stoney Stanton and Whetstone Pastures) entirely new waste collection rounds will likely be required. It is also recognised that strategic sites can present an opportunity to incorporate innovative waste management practices and technologies. The level of growth proposed could also trigger the need for a new waste handling facility (or increased capacity at existing facilities), though this would likely be beyond the plan period when most growth occurs at the strategic sites.
- 9.7.4 In addition to domestic waste generation, there will be an increase in employment waste during construction and operation phases.
- 9.7.5 Employment uses would generate commercial and industrial waste, the majority of which would be managed through established waste collection and disposal systems.
- 9.7.6 The sites involved are located within areas that are served by existing municipal and commercial waste infrastructure. It is therefore likely that waste can be effectively managed.
- 9.7.7 The Plan contains a range of other policies that will influence the impact of the spatial strategy and site allocation development in terms of waste management.
- 9.7.8 Notably this includes Policy INF11: Waste Management, Collection and Recycling which requires major schemes to submit a Waste Management Strategy covering construction and operation and encouraging on-site waste reduction and management measures.

- 9.7.9 Several site-specific policies also set out the requirement for Construction Environmental Management Plans (CEMPs) and long-term stewardship, which should help to integrate waste minimisation and materials management throughout project lifecycles.
- 9.7.10 More broadly, Policy S15: Design and Place Making requires development to facilitate effective waste management and recycling across the lifecycle of developments. Complementing this are principles embedded within Policy S6: Comprehensive Development and Masterplanning of Strategic Sites, which encourages holistic neighbourhood planning and understanding of utilities and infrastructure requirements (which includes waste management and collection). Policy CC1: Planning for Climate Change further supports waste objectives by supporting the re-use of existing buildings and materials.

Additional implications

- 9.7.11 In addition to the impacts discussed above in relation to the spatial strategy and allocated sites, the broad principles and requirements relating to waste management will apply to all other developments across the District. There is not a major shift in policy compared to the current position, but nevertheless, positive effects would be anticipated, especially where there are firmer requirements to demonstrate compliance (i.e. through CEMPs).
- 9.7.12 A selection of other policies are also likely to have indirect effects with regards to waste management, for example:
- 9.7.13 The Green and Blue Infrastructure Policy (ENV2) and water policies (CC2), Flood Risk Management and (CC3), Water Quality, Supply and Wastewater prioritise natural approaches to flood management. These policies indirectly support waste aims by encouraging nature-based solutions reduces the need to capture and treat water offsite at waste water treatment works. Conversely, the expansion of green infrastructure and active travel networks could possibly involve imported materials, aggregates and other materials which could generate waste during construction.
- 9.7.14 Encouraging the vitality of town, district and local centres (chapter 9 policies) will help to reuse existing buildings and infrastructure, which is positive in terms of reducing construction waste.
- 9.7.15 Conversely, densification can make servicing and collection of waste more difficult (but this will need to be managed through adhering to design and waste policies discussed above).

Overall effects

- 9.7.16 Whilst the Plan delivers new homes and employment sites, waste generation will likely be integrated effectively into existing waste collection regimes and is not considered likely to have significant effects on capacity over the plan period. Furthermore, all developments will be required to address waste and recycling considerations, to implement design that allows effective storage and servicing and encourage efficient use of resources.

- 9.7.17 This will help to ensure that additional waste streams are well managed. For certain developments, there are requirements for Construction Environmental Management Plans which will help to demonstrate compliance at construction phases.
- 9.7.18 Whilst growth will inevitably increase resource consumption, these policies should minimise additional waste, promote reuse and recycling, and support sustainable waste management over the lifecycle of developments. Several plan policies are also likely to have indirect positive effects in terms of waste reduction. Therefore, overall, **neutral effects** are anticipated with regard to waste.

9.8 Minerals

Appraisal of the Spatial Strategy

- 9.8.1 The spatial strategy includes housing and employment development in several locations that overlap with mineral safeguarded areas (MSAs). Several sites fall within MSAs for sand and gravel, almost entirely or partly.
- 9.8.2 The primary risk associated with the strategy in relation to minerals is the potential sterilisation of these resources, which occurs if these materials cannot be extracted before housing or employment construction begins.
- 9.8.3 However, it is recognised that minerals safeguarded areas cover a large part of the district, including these undeveloped areas, and therefore the potential sterilisation of resources is largely unavoidable if Blaby is to meet its identified housing and employment needs. It is also acknowledged that workable minerals may not be present in all safeguarded areas, and there are measures that can be taken to mitigate effects. For example, Mineral resources are protected through the Leicestershire Minerals and Waste Local Plan. In accordance with Policy M11 (of the minerals and waste plan) there is a need for sites that overlap with mineral safeguarding areas to undertake a minerals assessment.
- 9.8.4 Additionally, Strategic Development Site – Land West of Stoney Stanton requires development proposals to include measures to prevent the sterilisation of mineral resources within the site boundaries and within 500m of the site. These measures are anticipated to help reduce impacts to mineral resources, by ensuring that appropriate investigations are undertaken to understand the potential location and quality of resources and avoid their sterilisation.
- 9.8.5 Furthermore, the Conserving and Enhancing the Natural and Historic Environment chapter contains Policy ENV6: 'Mineral Safeguarding Areas'. This policy seeks to ensure that development proposals in areas identified for mineral safeguarding do not needlessly sterilise resources of national or local significance, in line with the Leicestershire Minerals and Waste Local Plan. As such, it is considered that the potential for the loss of resources (associated with the spatial strategy) is reduced.

Additional implications

- 9.8.6 Outside of the strategic development site policies and the Policy ‘Mineral Safeguarding Areas’ there are few stipulations made in relation to mineral resources within the Plan.
- 9.8.7 However, it is considered that wider policies could deliver benefits in relation to this theme. For example, defining, safeguarding and enhancing green and blue infrastructure through Policy ENV 2: ‘Green and Blue Infrastructure’ has the potential to safeguard important resources that underly the network, thus saving them from sterilisation.

Overall effects

- 9.8.8 In conclusion, the proposed spatial strategy seeks to balance the delivery of essential housing and development against the protection of mineral resources, acknowledging that overlaps with safeguarded areas are largely unavoidable due to the scale of identified need and widespread coverage of MSAs. To mitigate the risk of resource sterilisation, the Plan aligns with the Leicestershire Minerals and Waste Local Plan, requiring comprehensive minerals assessments for strategic sites. These assessments, mandated under Policy M11 of the Leicestershire Minerals and Waste Local Plan, ensure that the location and quality of resources are understood before construction begins. Where necessary and appropriate, specific measures have been included within site allocation policies, to further prevent resource loss.
- 9.8.9 Furthermore, the potential for the loss of minerals is reduced through complementary policies, where the safeguarding of landscape features, soils, and green and blue infrastructure.
- 9.8.10 Ultimately, by integrating site-specific investigations and broader environmental protections, and aligning with county-wide policy, the Plan aims to meet development requirements while ensuring that the loss of workable minerals is minimised. As such, broadly **neutral effects** are predicted with regards to this topic.

9.9 Soil and landscape

Appraisal of the Spatial Strategy

- 9.9.1 With regard to landscape sensitivity to residential development¹⁸, approximately 50% of the allocated sites are concluded as having a “medium” sensitivity, whilst the remaining sites are identified as having a “low-medium” sensitivity. Mitigation will be required to minimise impacts on landscape character – particularly with respect to the “medium” sensitivity sites.

¹⁸ Blaby District Council (2020): Blaby Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment, available to access via [this link](#)

- 9.9.2 None of the sites are considered to have a “high” sensitivity, impacts on landscape character are less likely to be significant for individual sites. However, Countesthorpe, Huncote and Cosby which could bring cumulative negative changes to village character. Residual effects will be largely dependent on development design and masterplanning, which will be influenced by several plan policies.
- 9.9.3 All development will need to be guided by Policy S15: Design and Place Making, which seeks to achieve visually attractive developments that take account of landscape features. Likewise, Policy ENV4: Landscape and Settlement Character seeks to protect and enhance settlement and landscape character across the district.
- 9.9.4 Policy ENV2: Green and Blue Infrastructure requires development to incorporate multi-functional green and blue infrastructure, with specific reference to responding to landscape, townscape and historic character. Complementing this Policy ENV3: Trees and Hedgerows is also important as it guides developers to protect features with landscape importance and to achieve a gain in coverage if possible, which will benefit urban areas and help to preserve rural fringe environments where development is planned.
- 9.9.5 Policy S6: Comprehensive Development and Masterplanning of Strategic Sites will be important for allocated sites. This policy requires a holistic approach to be taken that respects local landscape, settlement characteristics and implements high quality environments. The need to deliver a green infrastructure strategy and encouraging natural drainage management systems will also have positive effects on landscape and soil.
- 9.9.6 The strategic site policies introduce specific requirements that reflect local circumstances and for all sites includes consideration of green infrastructure, landscaping and the retention of important natural and built features. The requirement to submit a landscape and environment management plan with developments will help to ensure compliance, as will the need for long term stewardship arrangements on certain sites.
- 9.9.7 The two largest strategic sites – Land West of Stoney Stanton (STO026) (5,165 homes, of which around 965 in the plan period)) and Whetstone Pastures (WHE027) (4,500 homes, of which around 800 in the plan period) fall within the category of “low-medium”, and “medium” landscape sensitivity respectively. Given their scale and prominence relative to existing settlements, development of these sites has the potential to result in a significant change to local landscape character.
- 9.9.8 The Plan includes policies for each of these strategic sites that seek to address potential impacts upon landscape. There is an explicit requirement to deliver multi-functional green infrastructure on the Stoney Stanton site, with a key aim to provide a buffer between Stoney Stanton and Sapcote. This will also be achieved through sensitive design that reflects settlement characteristics, maintains open views and retains trees and vegetation.

- 9.9.9 The Whetstone Pastures policy requires development to respect local character and be designed according to 'Garden Village' principles. This will involve significant open space, green and blue infrastructure and appropriate landscape buffers.
- 9.9.10 The Green Wedge, Areas of Separation and Countryside policies will also be important given that there will be increased urban development over the plan period. These policies will both ensure that certain settlements are not inappropriately developed and / or merge with nearby settlements.
- 9.9.11 In terms of soil resources, and with a focus on agricultural land classification (ALC), all but one of the sites are predominantly (>50%) underlain by grades 1-3 agricultural land. Therefore, development will likely lead to the loss of agricultural land. However, it is not currently known whether this grade 3 agricultural land is 3a (BMV) or 3b (poorer quality), and a degree of uncertainty is noted in this respect. In addition, it is recognised that the availability of brownfield land in the district is limited. Therefore, while the loss of agricultural land will be largely unavoidable in order to meet housing need, it will nonetheless result in the significant permanent loss of this natural resource.

Additional implications

- 9.9.12 For ad hoc development, the same thematic policies discussed above will apply, and there will be protections in place to ensure that significant effects upon landscape and townscape can be avoided or mitigated.
- 9.9.13 Policies that directly protect the countryside and / or aim to retain important gaps between built up areas are likely to have benefits for both soil and landscape character. This primarily includes: Policy S16: Green Wedges, Policy S17: Areas of Separation, and Policy S18: Countryside.
- 9.9.14 Several policies also have relevance for landscape protection for other types of land use development. For example:
- Policy CC4: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy requires development to mitigate visual impacts, largely reiterating national policy on renewable energy.
 - Policy S14: Accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Show Persons requires that sites are well related to settlements and do not have significant impacts on landscape.
 - Policy R6: Supporting Sustainable Tourism, Leisure and Visitor Development requires consideration of impacts on rural character.
- 9.9.15 Several policies are likely to have indirect positive effects on landscape and townscape character. For example:
- Policies that seek to protect and enhance open space, leisure and recreation will help to maintain green spaces.
 - Encouraging the use of natural flood management schemes.

- Retail and centres policies continue to support the vitality of town, district and local centres, which will help to improve townscape whilst reducing pressure for development in out of centre locations that could be more likely to affect landscape character (on urban fringe sites for example).

Overall effects

- 9.9.16 The spatial strategy (and allocated sites) direct development to areas that have medium or low–medium sensitivity, meaning significant landscape impacts are unlikely if mitigation is applied. However, cumulative effects around Blaby, Countesthorpe, Huncote, and Cosby could erode village character, and the two strategic sites—Stoney Stanton and Whetstone Pastures— could alter local landscape character if not appropriately delivered due to their scale.
- 9.9.17 The Local Plan includes strong policies on design, landscape character, green and blue infrastructure, and tree cover, alongside site-specific requirements and long-term stewardship, which will help manage these risks. While the loss of agricultural land is largely unavoidable, policy emphasis on green infrastructure, natural drainage, and heritage integration will help to offset visual and environmental impacts. Overall, successful masterplanning and adherence to these policies will be critical to preserving landscape character and creating high-quality, distinctive places.
- 9.9.18 On balance, **minor negative effects** are predicted with regards to landscape (factoring in policy requirements) and **significant negative effects** are predicted with regards to soil resources.

9.10 Environmental protection: Water quality

Appraisal of the Spatial Strategy

- 9.10.1 The level of growth will increase demands for drinking water and wastewater treatment. At the scale of growth involved, many of the smaller sites located near existing settlements could be accommodated within current treatment capacity. However, the option still includes two strategic sites—Land West of Stoney Stanton (STO026) and Whetstone Pastures (WHE027)—where the scale of development could require upgrades to existing treatment plants. This introduces potential delays to delivery and highlights the need for early and ongoing coordination with water utilities to ensure that development phasing aligns with infrastructure readiness.
- 9.10.2 In terms of water quality, several proposed sites are crossed by or directly border local watercourses, including Whetstone Brook and Thurlaston Brook. Development on such land presents risks of pollution and increased surface water runoff.

- 9.10.3 For Whetstone Pastures, Land south of Whetstone, Land south of Abbott Way, and Land south of Narborough Road, the hydrological connections heighten the need for robust protective design measures such as buffer zones and high-quality (Sustainable Drainage Strategy) SuDS to ensure water quality is not adversely affected. While none of the sites fall within Source Protection Zones, these hydrological interactions still introduce vulnerabilities that require mitigation.
- 9.10.4 A more sensitive issue arises around Narborough and Enderby, where several sites lie within the Impact Risk Zone for Narborough Bogs SSSI, an ecologically significant area characterised by upland fen, wet woodland, and Leicestershire's only peat bog. The SSSI is already in unfavourable condition partly because of altered hydrology, eutrophication, and diffuse pollution, making it particularly susceptible to further disruption. Development at Hayes Gardens (NAR028), could present a risk, although initial evidence gathering indicates that surface water would discharge to watercourses downstream of the SSSI. Nonetheless until this is confirmed the precautionary principle should be applied and enhanced SuDS and carefully managed construction practices will help ensure the integrity of the protected site.
- 9.10.5 Policy S6: 'Comprehensive Development and Masterplanning of Strategic Sites' includes provisions for water. It indicates that development proposals will need to ensure the effective use of SuDS and sustainable water management. Whilst this stipulation relates more closely to flood risk management, it can be applied to the protection of water sources, as these measures are considered to reduce the potential for pollution to enter the water network through discharge and surface water flows.
- 9.10.6 Multiple site allocation policies require a drainage and water management strategy to be part of the development proposal, and for surface water management to be considered.
- 9.10.7 Furthermore, multiple site allocation policies also seek to ensure sustainable drainage systems based on natural flood management principles are integrated into the design of proposed development. A number of site allocation policies also include the need for CEMPs to be prepared, which address the impacts to surface water drainage during the construction phase. These measures are considered likely to contribute to the protection of water resources and their quality, through reducing water run-off from development sites – thus reducing the potential for pollutants to enter the water system.
- 9.10.8 It is noted that where there are local issues in relation to the environmental protection of water, the site allocation policies make appropriate provision, including:
- Strategic Development Site – Whetstone Pastures indicates that development will be supported where it integrates informal open space for water management.

- Strategic Development Site – Land West of Beggars Lane, Lubbesthorpe Strategic Site includes the need for development design to consider potential surface water flow path.
- Strategic Development Site – Land at Carlton Park, Narborough seeks to ensure development design reflects the hydraulic connectivity of the site to the River Soar. Additionally, the policy stipulates that water discharged from the site should pass through a minimum of three treatment trains prior to discharge (acknowledging potential risks to Narborough Bogs SSSI where discharge is up stream of this site).
- Strategic Development Site – Land South of Broughton Road, Stoney Stanton requires a buffer to be incorporated into the development design to the north of the site, to protect the watercourse from discharge from the site.

Additional implications

- 9.10.9 Policy CC3: 'Water Quality, Supply and Wastewater' is the main policy contributing to this topic; and its provisions are considered a benefit to the theme. The policy includes provisions to effectively meet future water resource needs, manage wastewater treatment, and manage drainage infrastructure.
- 9.10.10 This will be achieved through ensuring adequate water supply, sewerage and drainage infrastructure is delivered alongside identified growth, supporting work to reduce water demand (and thus reduce sewerage, drainage, and wastewater volumes), implementing SuDS into development, and ensuring development proposals with the potential to adversely affect water quality effectively mitigate this risk. As such, the provisions of the policy work well to safeguard water resources and their quality.
- 9.10.11 It is noted that further provisions for water resources and quality are made in the wider policy framework. Policy: HW3 'Ground Conditions, Pollution and Health' indicates that development will not be permitted if it results in an unacceptable risk to the environment due to contamination or pollution. Furthermore, development proposals within proximity to an aquifer or surface water feature will need to undertake a detailed investigation and identify mitigation measures to avoid adverse impacts to groundwater or surface water resources. Again, this helps to reduce the likelihood for negative impacts to water resources and quality, as development with contamination potential will be required to undertake mitigation.
- 9.10.12 Indirect beneficial effects are also likely to arise as a result of policies that promote green and blue infrastructure enhancement and flood risk management that makes use of natural solutions.

Overall effects

- 9.10.13 Whilst proposed growth will increase drinking water demand and place stress on existing supply infrastructure, these challenges are expected to be managed through local network upgrades and capacity improvements. The policy framework in the Plan is mindful of such issues and seeks to ensure that development is designed to mitigate risk.
- 9.10.14 Whilst none of the proposed sites intersect with Source Protection Zones, some developments are located adjacent to water features and there is potential for indirect effects on water dependent habitats such as Narborough Bogs SSSI.
- 9.10.15 To address these risks, the policy framework includes the need for development to use SuDS, comprehensive drainage strategies, and CEMPs to reduce runoff and prevent pollutants from entering the water network. Targeted site-specific requirements provide additional safeguards where necessary, and the wider thematic policies ensure that development only proceeds when supported by adequate infrastructure and detailed contamination investigations. These measures combined effectively safeguard the district's water resources and quality. As such, **neutral effects** are predicted.

9.11 Environmental protection: Air quality

Appraisal of the Spatial Strategy

- 9.11.1 The spatial strategy involves a wide distribution of development across the District, increasing the total number of new trips made by private vehicles while also expanding opportunities for sustainable travel where the sites are well located and involve upgrades to public transport and active travel infrastructure.
- 9.11.2 None of the proposed sites lie within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), and only two housing sites—Land at Desford Road / Beggar's Lane and Land south of Carlton Park—fall just beyond the 500–600 metre zone around AQMA 6 – Mill Hill in Enderby. Development at these locations could contribute additional traffic to the already congested B582 corridor, where nitrogen dioxide levels are known to be elevated. While this raises the potential for a degree of worsening within the AQMA, both sites benefit from strong access to bus services and, in the case of Hayes Gardens, proximity to Narborough Rail Station. This offers the potential for reducing car dependency, although the extent to which this moderates impacts will depend on the quality, reliability and integration of public transport and active travel connections as well as the extent of new facilities and services to be provided on site. It is also worth noting that there is an expected downward trajectory in terms of emissions from vehicles associated with an increased uptake of low emission vehicles.

- 9.11.3 In this context, increased growth has potential to be accommodated without significantly raising air quality concerns. This is reflected in the Council's Air quality evidence that concludes *'even when the Local Plan growth is included, the predicted changes in NO₂, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} are extremely small, typically less than one microgram per cubic metre, and are therefore considered negligible in terms of potential effects on human health. In simple terms, this means that future development proposed in the Local Plan is not expected to cause any new exceedances of air quality standards or noticeable deterioration in air quality' in existing AQMAs'*
- 9.11.4 Across the wider distribution almost all sites fall within walking distance of bus services, supporting a pattern of growth that is generally well placed to encourage sustainable travel behaviour. The strategic housing sites, in particular, have the scale to deliver significant on-site transport infrastructure, including new bus stops, mobility hubs and active travel networks, which could help shift some travel away from private vehicles. However, even with these opportunities, both housing and employment growth will still lead to an overall rise in vehicle movements across the District as evidenced in the Council's transport evidence.
- 9.11.5 Increases in commuter traffic, school trips, servicing, and delivery activity would be dispersed across a larger area rather than concentrated at specific hotspots, meaning that air-quality effects would be incremental and spread across multiple corridors. These changes would occur alongside generally improving air-quality trends within the District, but some uncertainty remains regarding the extent of peak-time congestion and the potential cumulative contribution to pollutant levels on sensitive sections of the network.

Additional implications

- 9.11.6 Policy HW4: 'Air Quality' is the main policy concerned with this topic. It outlines support for development where it will not have a significant impact on local air quality – including through impacting upon air quality objectives, exposing residents and visitors to an excess in air quality objectives, and avoiding trapping air pollutants close to the ground.
- 9.11.7 The policy also requires development that is anticipated to result in negative effects on air quality to be supported by an air quality assessment, to consider the likely effects and create a plan to mitigate them. Furthermore, the policy outlines the need for CEMPs to accompany major development, to avoid, minimise or mitigate air quality effects on development sites and their surroundings. It is considered that these measures help to mitigate the potential for adverse impacts on air quality through development.
- 9.11.8 The wider policy framework also considers air quality. Development will need to meet the standards for air quality and should not result in adverse impacts to health as a result of poor air quality (Policy HW1: 'Healthy Communities').

9.11.9 This includes ensuring new gypsy and traveller accommodation does not come forward in areas where air pollution could adversely affect health or living conditions (Policy S14: 'Accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Show Persons').

9.11.10 To maintain or enhance air quality, or mitigate negative air quality impacts, development proposals should select appropriate tree species to integrate into new growth (Policy ENV3: 'Trees and Hedgerows'), and could also promote sustainable transport opportunities to reduce the need to travel by private vehicle (Policy INF5: 'Active and Healthy Travel'). This is anticipated to reduce poor air quality by lowering the level of vehicular pollutants being released (which is already on a downward trajectory due to cleaner vehicles).

Overall effects

9.11.11 To conclude, taking these factors together, uncertain **minor negative effects** on air quality are predicted. The total scale of growth increases the likelihood of additional emissions, yet the spatial distribution of sites away from designated AQMAs, good levels of public-transport accessibility, and the potential for new sustainable transport infrastructure at strategic sites all help to limit the overall magnitude of harm. Although some contribution to congestion and localised air-quality deterioration is probable - the effects are not expected to be significant, and in the long term, the air quality baseline is anticipated to improve due to external factors.

9.11.12 The wider plan policies work well to protect and promote improved air quality in Blaby, achieved through site specific requirements for air quality surveys where growth would come forward within proximity to motorways, railways, and industrial sources. Furthermore, the policy framework is solidified through Policy HW4: 'Air Quality', which mandates air quality assessments and CEMPs for major developments to prevent an increase in pollutants and mitigate negative effects. By integrating these measures with wider environmental strategies, such as selecting appropriate tree species to filter air and promoting active and healthy travel, the impacts of growth on air quality ought to be possible to manage effectively.

9.12 Climate change:

Appraisal of the Spatial Strategy

9.12.1 In terms of fluvial flooding, there is only a minor overlap of site allocations with Fluvial Flood Zones 2 and 3, demonstrating that fluvial flood risk is not a significant constraint. Additionally, whilst a level of surface water flood risk is to be anticipated, it is likely that sensitive design (including the design of site layouts and the use of SuDS) will help to minimise this risk.

- 9.12.2 Regarding climate change mitigation, although an increase in the built environment in Blaby will inevitably raise net greenhouse gas emissions, the strategy works to mitigate this through ensuring development is well related to bus services, and supports active travel infrastructure to promote sustainable transport. This includes walking, cycling or wheeling, or travelling via public transport.
- 9.12.3 There is also support for sustainable design measures that will help (alongside the Future Homes Standard) to promote developments that are more carbon efficient and reduce per capita emissions compared to existing stock. As such, the strategy works to provide a balanced approach, working to meet the identified housing and employment needs whilst maintaining a low flood risk profile and delivering a good standard of design.
- 9.12.4 Ultimately, the success of the strategy will depend on detailed site design and the strengthening of the green infrastructure network to bolster resilience against heatwaves and flash flooding.
- 9.12.5 Where there are known local issues, the site allocation policies make provision in relation to climate change. These largely relate to flood risk, and includes (but is not limited to):
- Delivering a Drainage and Water Management Strategy to address areas of fluvial flood risk and surface water flows within sites.
 - Requiring that SuDS seek to retain surface water of greenfield rates - 20%
 - Ensuring development does not come forward within identified surface water flood risk flow paths including sites at Land West of Beggars Lane, Lubbethorpe Strategic Site and Land South of Maurice Drive and Gillam Butts, Countesthorpe; and Land West of Peatling Road, Countesthorpe).
- 9.12.6 Additionally, the majority of the strategic development site policies include provisions to ensure specific flood risk is addressed through development, based on natural flood management principles and using a sustainable drainage system. As such, it is considered that the site allocation policies work well to reduce the risk and effects of flooding within and in proximity to the site boundaries.

Additional implications

- 9.12.7 In relation to carbon and greenhouse gas emissions, Policy S6: 'Comprehensive Development and Masterplanning of Strategic Sites' includes stipulations to help reduce the impact of growth. This includes a requirement for a Sustainability and Energy Framework to be implemented, to identify opportunities for low and zero carbon infrastructure.

- 9.12.8 Additionally, in relation to flood risk, Policy S6: 'Comprehensive Development and Masterplanning of Strategic Sites' requires large scale development to ensure the effective use of SuDS and sustainable water management based on natural flood management, to help reduce flood risk and flood effects within sites. As such, it is considered that this policy works well to reduce the climate change impact of large-scale development, by addressing flood risk and effects (where relevant) and exploring the potential to reduce emissions.
- 9.12.9 The main policies linked to the climate change topic are included in Chapter 4 – 'Climate Change and Flooding'.
- 9.12.10 Policy CC1: 'Planning for Climate Change' supports development which mitigates and adapts to climate change, including through incorporating or enabling renewable and low carbon technology, supporting the re-use of existing buildings to maximise the use of embodied carbon, and cutting embodied carbon and carbon emissions where new buildings are proposed.
- 9.12.11 The focus on including renewable and low carbon energy in development is reiterated through Policy CC4: 'Renewable and Low Carbon Energy'. These overarching policies are considered to have positive effects in relation to climate change through promoting lower carbon growth, which reduces greenhouse gas emissions (broadly in line with national policy requirements).
- 9.12.12 Also within Chapter 4 is Policy CC2: 'Flood Risk', which outlines Blaby Council's sequential approach to flood risk management. The policy indicates that priority will be given to sites with the lowest risk of flooding, and the development of sites with a greater risk of flooding will only be supported where the wider anticipated sustainability benefits of the proposal outweigh the flood risk (as per national policy). The policy also outlines requirements for development in areas of increased flood risk, including the need for resilience, taking into consideration all forms of flooding, and ensuring mitigation measures are incorporated effectively. Additionally, the policy provides further guidance on proposals for flood management or other linked infrastructure, as well as on development within proximity to watercourses, to help further reduce flood risk and effects. These stipulations are considered to work well to reduce flood risk and flood effects on new and existing development linked to the spatial strategy.
- 9.12.13 Furthermore, Policy CC3: 'Water Quality, Supply and Wastewater' also contributes towards reducing flood risk through ensuring development works with Leicestershire County Council (as the lead Local Flood Authority for Blaby) to deliver SuDS that manage surface water run-off and reduce pressure on local drainage infrastructure. Again, this is anticipated to bring forward positive effects in relation to flood risk by reducing the potential for adverse effects.
- 9.12.14 The wider plan policies also have a focus on climate change and emissions. Policy S16: 'Green Wedges' outlines support for renewable and low carbon energy development in green wedges where it would not be harmful to the function of the important strategic area.

9.12.15 This focus is also reiterated through Policy 'Countryside'. Additionally, policies concerned with promoting active and sustainable travel uptake (Policy INF5: 'Active and Healthy Travel') are considered to have a benefit in relation to climate change through reducing carbon emissions linked to transportation in Blaby.

9.12.16 Wider plan policies also have a focus on flood risk management. This is demonstrated through ensuring development is sympathetically located and designed in relation to existing flood risk and effects, to ensure that new development does not exacerbate flooding concerns (Policy S14: 'Accommodation for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Show Persons'; Policy, R3: 'Motorways Retail Area, Everards Meadows and Meridian Leisure'; and Policy INF 3: 'Burial Provision').

Overall effects

9.12.17 The spatial strategy for Blaby takes a balanced approach to growth by seeking to ensure that climate change mitigation and adaptation are built into how new development is planned. This means the strategy aims not only to manage the effects of climate change but also to help reduce future emissions.

9.12.18 A key part of this approach is strong flood risk management. The strategy aims to make sure new development is sustainable and resilient, and that it does not increase flood risk for existing communities.

9.12.19 To reduce greenhouse gas emissions linked to a growing built environment, the strategy places new development in locations where people can travel more sustainably.

9.12.20 Strategic policies also support low-carbon design by requiring large-scale developments to prepare Sustainability and Energy Frameworks, encouraging renewable and low-carbon energy technologies, and promoting the re-use of existing buildings to retain embodied carbon.

9.12.21 The strategy also uses a sequential approach to flood risk, meaning that sites with the lowest flood risk are prioritised for development. It requires the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and natural flood management techniques to control surface water.

9.12.22 In addition, each allocated development site must prepare a Drainage and Water Management Strategy to ensure that new development does not worsen existing flooding issues.

9.12.23 Overall, the strategy is expected to have **minor positive effects** on climate change resilience and mitigation. This reflects the emphasis on reducing flood risk, supporting climate-resilient development, and lowering per capita carbon emissions across new and existing development in Blaby.

9.13 Economy:

Appraisal of the Spatial Strategy

- 9.13.1 The main policy concerned with the economy is Policy S3: 'Strategy for a Prosperous Economy', which supports the delivery of a strong and prosperous local economy in Blaby in line with the Council's Economic Development Framework. It seeks to deliver approximately 53 hectares of local employment land (of which 39ha is new provision) at appropriate locations across Blaby (in addition to existing strategic employment land commitments), to provide a flexible supply of future sites for offices, industrial and warehousing needs. The policy also supports local labour agreements, in order to enable secure employment and skills development, and supports participation in the green economy.
- 9.13.2 Additionally, Policy S5 'Site Allocations for Local and Strategic Employment Uses' seeks to safeguard further strategic employment provision post 2042. These policies are anticipated to bring forward positive effects in relation to the economy, as they are providing additional space for economic opportunities and certainty regarding the future provision of commercial land to meet local and sub regional needs.
- 9.13.3 The proposed spatial strategy is predicted to generate significant positive effects for the local economy in Blaby. This is through fostering job creation and sustaining essential local services. In addition to expanding existing employment areas, the strategy utilises mixed-use development approaches over the longer term to integrate housing with employment land and community infrastructure. This approach is anticipated to strengthen the self-sufficiency of new communities and support in-situ job creation, which is likely to contribute to bolstering the overall economic health of Blaby.
- 9.13.4 The employment sites are not all within walking distance to most existing communities. However, to promote accessibility for all residents, including those without private vehicles, development is located within walking distance of a bus stop as far as possible, to help promote sustainable transport patterns and maintain connectivity to employment opportunities within and beyond Blaby.
- 9.13.5 Furthermore, the increase in population and workforce associated with the proposed spatial strategy is anticipated to enhance the viability of town centres and local businesses by providing a larger customer and labour base, helping to mitigate the impacts of structural changes in the retail sector. Overall, the proposed strategy is anticipated to perform well in relation to the economy topic, by providing a necessary level of growth that effectively sustains services and employment whilst encouraging more self-contained and sustainable communities.

Additional implications

- 9.13.6 Policy S6: 'Comprehensive Development and Masterplanning of Strategic Sites' makes provisions in relation to the economy topic, as it requires large-scale development to provide safe access to key facilities. This includes local employment opportunities. As such, it is considered that this policy positively contributes towards the topic, as new and existing communities will have a good level of access to employment infrastructure within Blaby, which will help to generate local income within the District.
- 9.13.7 The site allocation policies also include stipulations in relation to the economy. This includes (but is not limited to):
- Allocating employment land as part of the development proposal.
 - The provision of infrastructure and services, such as supermarket, convenience, and retail space.
 - Including small scale local employment space and opportunities in development proposals.
 - The creation of local centres as part of new developments.
- 9.13.8 This further demonstrates a focus on delivering economic benefits, by ensuring new sites deliver additional employment infrastructure and ancillary uses.
- 9.13.9 Chapter 8 – Employment includes a number of policies that will contribute towards the economy topic. Policy E2: 'Key Employment Sites and Existing Employment Areas' seeks to retain and enhance employment uses on identified Key Employment Sites, such as Blaby Industrial Estate and Wharf Way. The policy also indicates that proposals for the redevelopment, renewal, intensification, or extension of certain employment uses will be supported, and sets out clear criteria for instances where the loss of employment land would be permitted. As such, the policy works well to ensure a continuous supply of employment space in Blaby. This is reiterated through Policy E3: 'Employment Development on Unallocated Sites', which supports new employment developments on unallocated sites adjacent to certain settlement boundaries (Principal Urban Area, Larger Villages and Medium Villages).
- 9.13.10 Wider plan policies are also considered to have an economy impact. This includes Policy S13: 'Strategy for Retail and Leisure and 'Network of Centres', which creates an investment hierarchy to guide retail, town centre and leisure activity. This contributes to the economy topic by ensuring employment space and economic opportunities are focused in appropriate and accessible areas within Blaby District. This is further reiterated through Policy R2: 'Blaby Town Centre, District and local Centres', which ensures Blaby remains a focus for retail and leisure development, and Policy R4 'Neighbourhood Parades', which helps to maintain small-scale retail uses that meet the daily needs of local communities.

9.13.11 The economy is further considered through Policy HW1: 'Healthy Communities', which indicates that development proposals will be supported where they provide improved employment opportunities in Blaby, which will contribute high quality, well-paid jobs that are accessible to the local community. It is also considered through Policy R5: 'Sustainable Tourism, Leisure and Visitor Development', which seeks to support new visitor facilities and hotels, which will help promote the tourism economy in Blaby.

Overall effects

9.13.12 The proposed spatial strategy focuses on fostering a robust and self-sufficient local economy by integrating housing with employment land and community infrastructure through mixed-use developments. To support this growth, specific policies aim to deliver additional employment land for industrial and warehousing needs, as well as for offices, light industry, and non-strategic distribution uses. This framework is reinforced by efforts to retain and enhance existing Key Employment Sites, while allowing for managed growth on unallocated sites to ensure a continuous supply of workspace.

9.13.13 Accessibility to employment remains a central priority, with development guidelines requiring proximity to sustainable transport links like bus stops and the provision of safe access to employment infrastructure to generate local income. Additionally, the strategy seeks to diversify the economy by establishing a retail investment hierarchy, supporting local employment space, and promoting high-quality, well-paid jobs alongside sustainable tourism. By expanding the local customer and labour base, the plan seeks to enhance the viability of town centres and mitigate structural changes in the retail sector. As such, **significant positive effects** are considered likely.

9.14 Accessibility

Appraisal of the Spatial Strategy

9.14.1 The proposed spatial strategy is characterised by its focus on bringing forward growth (both housing and employment land) in areas within walking distance (less than 800m) of an existing bus stop. This proximity to the public transport network is intended to facilitate resident access to employment, education, health services, and wider vital infrastructure and facilities across Blaby. This is important, given that some of the sites located close to smaller settlements may suffer from fewer services being readily available in the settlement centres. Some of the employment sites are also not within walking distance of settlement and require public transport or private vehicular access. It should be acknowledged though that close proximity to a bus stop does not necessarily equate to good accessibility if bus services do not provide links to important services and / or are of poor frequency. Therefore, mixed outcomes could be expected.

- 9.14.2 The two large mixed use strategic sites (Land West of Stoney Stanton and Whetstone Pastures) are currently not well connected to existing services, but the scale of growth involved will support the creation of self-sufficient communities that encourage active travel and reduce the need to travel. There is also strong support for public transport enhancement that will be facilitated through the requirement for mobility hubs. Some of these effects are unlikely to arise until the end (or beyond) the Plan period, but it is important to acknowledge that this Plan lays the foundations for the creation of these communities.
- 9.14.3 Given that the spatial strategy seeks to focus growth largely in accessible locations within the district, it is likely that there will be a reasonable level of sustainable transport uptake. However, there remains a level of uncertainty over whether residents will opt for private vehicle usage over sustainable transport modes, which could lead to elevated congestion in parts of the District. It is also important to acknowledge that despite public transport services being present in some settlements, this is not of an equal standard across the District, so car use is likely to continue.
- 9.14.4 With regards to employment land, the sectors served are also likely to result in an increase in business trip movement, which will contribute to increased congestion on the road networks (though much of this could be contained on the strategic routes).
- 9.14.5 Where there are local issues, the site allocation policies make provision in relation to accessibility. This includes (but is not limited to):
- Delivering new and improved transport infrastructure, including improving existing walking and cycling routes and providing new ones.
 - Encouraging a shift towards active and sustainable travel uptake.
 - The creation of mobility hubs to increase non-car travel and encourage a modal shift towards sustainable and active transport alternatives.
 - The requirement to submit a Sustainable Transport Strategy and Movement Framework alongside the planning application for the site.
 - The maintenance of public rights of way.
 - Improving the road network.
- 9.14.6 Additionally, where required, specific site policies include access stipulations for ingress and egress of the site. Through these measures, it is anticipated that potential adverse effects to accessibility will be mitigated. This is through ensuring that sustainable and active transportation opportunities to key facilities are readily available and accessible to residents. This not only contributes to accessibility of infrastructure but could also contribute towards reducing congestion issues in Blaby, as there will be viable alternatives to the private vehicle, which will help to reduce the number of cars on the road network. In particular the provision of new facilities and services on strategic sites will help to internalise trips within new developments.

Additional implications

- 9.14.7 Policy S6 ‘Comprehensive Development and Masterplanning of Strategic Sites’ requires large scale, strategic development proposals to explain how they will connect new growth to new and existing facilities – given that safe access to infrastructure including schools and local employment must be provided. It also requires development proposals to integrate accessible and sustainable transport systems – walking through the creation of pedestrian friendly streets, cycling through connected cycleways, and public transport through connected footpaths and sustainable transport routes. Under this policy, development must also be supported by a masterplan that outlines key transport infrastructure, including (but not limited to) access points, street hierarchy, and footways and cycleways, undertaken through a Transport Assessment. This policy demonstrates the focus of design on ensuring sites are accessible for a range of users, which is a clear benefit for this topic.
- 9.14.8 The Infrastructure and Transport chapter contains numerous policies that have a direct influence on accessibility in Blaby. Policy INF4: ‘Sustainable Travel in New Developments’ outlines support for development proposals that are supported by a clear transport vision, which includes ensuring that appropriate provision is made for safe access via walking, cycling and wheeling modes, and providing for public transport users. It also requires that developments deliver the assumed level of trip containment and modal shift expected and seeks to ensure that where travel strategies do not perform as expected further measures are identified to ensure effective delivery.
- 9.14.9 The policy also requires that travel generated by the development does not have an impact upon highway safety, transport infrastructure efficiency and the efficiency and availability of public transport services.
- 9.14.10 Furthermore, development with significant transport implications will need to be accompanied by a Transport Assessment and Travel Plan, in line with the Leicestershire Highways Design Guide, to identify and mitigate impacts of the development proposal on the transport network. As such, Policy INF4: ‘Sustainable Travel in New Developments’ is anticipated to bring forward positive effects in relation to the accessibility topic, as it ensures that new development is safe for all transportation types and users. By encouraging a focus on sustainable and active transportation types, it is also likely the policy will help to lower congestion compared to unconstrained growth.
- 9.14.11 Furthermore, the focus on promoting active travel opportunities, where appropriate, is reiterated through Policy INF5: ‘Active and Healthy Travel’, which encourages development to integrate infrastructure (such as route marking and cycle storage) into development design. Additionally, the focus on accessibility via public transport is further reiterated through Policy INF6: ‘Public Transport’, which seeks to further integrate infrastructure (such as bus shelters and real time travel information boards) into development design.

9.14.12 The wider Infrastructure and Transport policies also have a focus on accessibility. Policy INF8: 'Parking and Highway Design Standards' outlines parking requirements in development, indicating that parking should also reflect the availability and opportunities for public transport use. Additionally, Policy INF2: 'Community Facilities' indicates that where new infrastructure is required, it should be provided where there is good accessibility by walking, cycling / wheeling and public transport. Finally, Policy INF3 'Burial Provision' outlines the need for proposals for new burial grounds or expansions to existing burial grounds to include good means of access to the highway, bus routes or other transport nodes. These policies also contribute towards accessibility through ensuring travel considerations are integrated into development design.

9.14.13 Wider plan policies also have a focus on accessibility. This is largely through ensuring that development is well connected in relation to public and active transportation opportunities (Policy: CC1 'Planning for Climate Change'; Policy: H4 'Specialist and Accessible Accommodation'; Policy E3: 'Employment Development on Unallocated Sites'; Policy R1: 'Sequential Test and Impact Assessment'; Policy R3: 'Motorways Retail Area, Everards Meadows and Meridian Leisure'; and Policy R5: 'Supporting Sustainable Tourism, Leisure and Visitor Development'). This is also achieved through securing improvements to the local and wider transport network (Policy R3: 'Motorways Retail Area, Everards Meadows and Meridian Leisure'), and providing necessary highway mitigation work (Policy R5: 'Supporting Sustainable Tourism, Leisure and Visitor Development').

Overall effects

9.14.14 In conclusion, the proposed spatial strategy for Blaby supports sustainable and accessible growth by focusing development in areas within proximity to existing (or planned) active and sustainable travel opportunities and infrastructure. This helps to ensure that residents have direct access to important employment, education, and health services.

9.14.15 While there is acknowledged uncertainty regarding whether residents will fully transition from private vehicles to sustainable modes, the strategy implements policies to mitigate potential congestion and improve the transport network.

9.14.16 These policies require large-scale developments to be supported by masterplans and Transport Assessments that integrate pedestrian-friendly streets, connected cycleways, and enhanced public transport infrastructure, such as mobility hubs and real-time travel information. Furthermore, the integration of accessibility into wider plan policies ensures that safe and active transportation is a focus and design element of new developments. Ultimately, these measures aim to encourage a modal shift toward non-car travel, creating a more accessible and efficient transport network for all users. As such, potential / uncertain **significant positive effects** are identified as likely in relation to sustainable travel.

9.14.17 Though measures are in place to address increases in traffic, it is likely that the Plan will still generate residual **minor negative effects** in terms of 'congestion' - although more notable impacts could arise in some localised areas. There will likely be short term disturbances due to construction activities, and an overall increase in the number of locations generating car trips. Though the Plan itself is not predicted to have significant effects in terms of congestion and traffic, it is important to note that levels of background growth (i.e. the baseline position) are already expected to create a more significant impact. Whilst the additional growth proposed by the Plan is predicted to have minor effects - when combined with the existing impacts - the baseline position will be affected further.

9.15 Summary of Plan effects

9.15.1 Table 9.1 below presents the overall effects for the SA topics. This is followed by a summary discussion.

Table 9.1 Overall effects of the Plan

SA Topics	Overall effects
Health: Long term health outcomes	Significant positive
Health: Short term impacts	Minor negative
Population and housing	Significant positive
Biodiversity and Geodiversity	Minor positive
Cultural Heritage	Neutral
Waste	Neutral
Minerals	Neutral
Landscape	Minor negative
Soil	Significant negative
Water quality	Neutral
Air quality	Minor negative ?
Climate Change Mitigation	Minor positive
Climate Change resilience	Minor positive
Economy	Significant positive
Congestion	Minor negative
Sustainable travel	Significant positive ?

- 9.15.2 The appraisal of the draft Blaby Local Plan demonstrates that it is predicted to deliver predominantly significant positive effects, particularly in relation to housing provision, health and wellbeing, economic resilience, sustainable accessibility and climate change response, while managing environmental risks through a strengthened policy framework.
- 9.15.3 The key significant negative impact relates to the loss of soil resources, whilst other negative effects are likely to be more minor in nature relating to landscape, congestion, air quality and health (in the short term).
- 9.15.4 The Plan adopts a more strategic, infrastructure-led and outcomes-focused approach, consistent with the NPPF's emphasis on sustainable development, healthy communities and long-term place-making. Key distinguishing features include:
- Housing delivery above minimum need, including provision for Leicester's unmet housing demand.
 - A greater focus on long-term growth, through two strategic standalone communities that extend benefits beyond the plan period.
 - A marked shift towards embedding infrastructure, services and health facilities directly within new communities, rather than relying primarily on financial contributions.
 - Stronger policy integration across housing, health, climate change, green infrastructure and transport.
- 9.15.5 The appraisal identifies several negative effects, primarily arising from the scale and pace of growth rather than from policy gaps. These include permanent changes to landscape character and loss of agricultural land, short-term pressure on healthcare, schools and transport networks during early phases of development, temporary construction impacts on amenity, localised biodiversity disturbance, and some effects on the setting of heritage assets. The Plan addresses these risks through a robust, plan-led mitigation framework, including landscape-led masterplanning, green wedges and buffers, early and on-site provision of infrastructure, strong requirements for sustainable transport and construction management, mandatory biodiversity net gain and site-specific ecological safeguards, and heritage-led design supported by detailed assessment.
- 9.15.6 While some residual effects are unavoidable, particularly in relation to soil, landscape change and construction disruption, these are proportionate to the level of growth, largely temporary or localised, and are significantly reduced through policy requirements, ensuring that the majority of negative effects are minor. For soil, which there remains a significant negative effect, mitigation has been identified (and strengthened in response to recommendations made through the SA process). See section 10 below.

10. Mitigation and Enhancement

10.1 Introduction

- 10.1.1 This section summarises the key mitigation and enhancement measures that have been identified throughout the SA process.
- 10.1.2 The measures identified at each stage are appropriate and proportionate to the corresponding level of detail and progress of the Plan at that point in time. Therefore, recommendations made at vision/objectives stage are very high level, whilst those made at the draft Plan appraisal stage are more specific.
- 10.1.3 Given that there were still choices to be made with regards to the spatial strategy and site allocations, some of the recommendations made at the options consultation stage relate to identified impacts associated with different patterns of growth.
- 10.1.4 Other measures relate to thematic policies and generally seek to pose a challenge to the Plan in terms of seeking to achieve high standards of sustainability. However, it is acknowledged that there may be barriers to the implementation of such recommendations (such as viability), and there will also be trade-offs to be made between sustainability factors.

10.2 Vision and objectives

Recommendation	Council Response
Though draft Plan Objective SO8 is already compatible with the SA objectives in relation to biodiversity, it is considered beneficial to strengthen the references to biodiversity recovery. It could therefore be amended to explicitly embed the principle of 'environmental net gain'.	A section has been added to the biodiversity policy (ENV1) which specifically addresses biodiversity and geodiversity Improvements. In addition, other policies have been included in the Plan including a green and blue infrastructure policy (ENV2) that requires that new developments deliver a biodiversity net gain and support ecosystem services. A tree planting policy (ENV3) has been included within the Plan to ensure the retention of and planting of new hedgerows and trees on development sites. The policies drafted have regard to aims of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and reflect the Lawton principles of 'Bigger, Better and More Joined Up'. The Plan also includes a Design and Place-making Policy (S15) to include a requirement for new development to enhance local biodiversity including through the inclusion of easily deliverable measures such as bird safe glass, hedgehog highways, swift and bat boxes and the inclusion of swales and permanently wet attenuation basins.

Recommendation	Council Response
Environment net gain should be referred to explicitly in the objectives.	Biodiversity net gain is now referred to as part of Plan Objective to reflect both the mandatory nature of BNG but also the need for new development to deliver an improvement in the ecological baseline of the district.

10.3 Strategic options

10.3.1 As part of the assessment of strategic options, several recommendations were made with the intention of influencing the spatial strategy in general terms.

Recommendation	Council Response
Health Site allocations will need to meet the requirement of providing adequate play, open space and green infrastructure where possible, and to also retain in situ or replace facilities where these are located within site options.	The plan seeks to specify open space standards. For larger (strategic) developments these are specifically set out within site policies, whilst for smaller sites Policy HW2 sets out provision requirements per 1000 people for a range of typologies including parks, play space, natural greenspace and allotments. INF2 (Community Facilities) set out requirements for the provision of new or expanded community facilities. In addition the Design and Place-making Policy (S15) includes a requirement for new development to address social sustainability issues, by supporting healthy lifestyles, including through the promotion of active travel, the incorporation of, connectivity to, and provision of public open space, sports and other leisure facilities.
Health In terms of opportunities, a strategic approach to green infrastructure provision could help to strengthen links between built up areas and settlements. This approach should be explored as the preferred strategy emerges.	As noted above the Council has sought to take a strategic approach to the retention and delivery of green and blue infrastructure. Policy ENV2 outlines the types of green infrastructure we will seek to protect, enhance and strengthen. The Plan also has regard to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and the Council's Blue Green Infrastructure Study. In addition, the Plan includes strategic policies in respect of Green wedges (Policy S16) Areas of Separation (Policy S17) and thematic policies in respect of Biodiversity and Geodiversity (ENV1) and Landscape and Settlement Character (ENV4).

Recommendation	Council Response
Soil it would be advisable to avoid locations where quality appears more likely to be high such as to the east of Huncote and north of Cosby.	This is noted, although there is little soil in the District which is grade 2 and none which is grade 1. Most soil in Blaby is comprised of grade 3 soils but on strategic level mapping it is not possible to differentiate between the two classes Grade 3a (best and most versatile) and Grade 3b. Nonetheless we have included provisions in Policy HW3 to (Ground Conditions, Pollution and Health) to ensure new development includes mitigation to avoid any adverse impacts on soils of high environmental value. We have also included a Housing Mix and Density Policy (H3) in the Plan to ensure the efficient use of land.
Climate Change Support the allocation of sites (and policy content) that allow for drainage solutions that mimic natural processes.	The Plan has been drafted to support natural drainage solutions. It includes a significant number of provisions to ensure that SuDS are incorporated into new development and that these are based on Natural Flood Management (NFM) provisions rather than engineered SuDS. These requirements are set out in the strategic site allocations, local site allocations and Policies CC1 (Planning for Climate Change), CC2 (Flood Risk) in particular clause 3 which requires SUDS mimic natural drainage patterns, and CC3 (Water Quality, Supply and Wastewater)
Economy Greater amounts of growth should be placed in areas where work is accessible to a wide range of communities, ideally by sustainable modes of transport.	The Plan has sought to distribute housing and commercial growth to locations that are immediately sustainable or to large mixed use communities where jobs can be balanced with new housing growth. In addition, the Plan seeks to prioritise active travel and other sustainable modes of access. This is evident in Policies S7 (Land West of Stoney Stanton), S8 (Whetstone Pastures), S12 (Land South of Whetstone) and Policy E1a (Land to the North of Mill Lane) all of which include requirements to ensure access by a range of non-car means. New housing is similarly located in sustainable locations so residents can access existing employment opportunities.

Recommendation	Council Response
Accessibility Regardless of the strategy, there is a need to ensure that new development is supported by public transport improvements, enhancements to local services, and enhancement of local transport networks.	A number of policies have been included in the plan to ensure that new residents have access to local services and facilities. INF4 (Sustainable Travel in New Developments), INF5 (Active and Healthy Travel) and INF6 (Public Transport) have been included in the plan to ensure all new development contributes towards improving access to all destinations by a range of transport modes. The Plan seeks to maximise the delivery of new services and facilities on strategic sites, S7-S12 and the Council will, through discussion with stakeholders and site promoters, ensure that new communities can access services and facilities close to where they live through a wide range of transport modes and in particular through active travel.

10.4 Draft Plan Appraisal

10.4.1 At this stage of the SA, only one recommendation was made in relation to significant negative effects on soil. This is to be expected given that:

- Previous stages of SA have helped to inform Plan development.
- The assessment at this stage is 'policy on', and the Plan includes a range of policy measures designed to mitigate potential negative effects (and maximise positives).

10.4.2 Where residual negative effects are predicted, this does not mean that mitigation has not been considered or addressed. Indeed, it is acknowledged that there are a range of policy measures in the Plan that have helped to reduce the significance of negative effects, so that only minor impacts remain. These are summarised below under the corresponding SA topics where negative effects are predicted.

Recommendations / residual negative effects	Council Response
Soil Significant negative effects are predicted with regards to soils, which in part is unavoidable given the need to deliver housing and employment land and the relative lack of previously developed land in the District. It is noted that Policy (Ground Conditions Pollution and Health) requires an understanding of impacts and suitable mitigation in relation to a range of factors including 'soil and agricultural land'. Given the significant effects predicted and the potential for further impacts associated with ad hoc development, it is recommended that the policy requirement in relation to soil are strengthened. For example, the need to undertake a soil resource survey and a soil management plan will provide a more proactive approach to avoiding and mitigating (and enhancing) soil resources.	The policy has been amended to strengthen the requirements in respect of soil resources. Specifically, it requires the submission of a soil management plan alongside any planning application. Either as a standalone document or as part of a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) that sets how the measures to mitigate or reduce the impacts on soils have been considered as part of the development proposals.
Health: Short Term Impacts Short term negatives effects are predicted in respect of health. Much of this may arise due to perceived impacts on local infrastructure and facilities such as healthcare facilities and schools. Or impact on the environment for example in respect of traffic and construction dust, noise and other disturbance. The loss of countryside around existing settlements may also affect some residents	Smaller scale developments will come forward at the start of the plan period. These will make contributions to expand existing facilities as required in Policy INF2: Developer Contributions and INF2: Community Facilities. The plan programmes larger sites to come forward in the middle to latter part of the plan period and so access to and delivery of infrastructure as part of these developments can be planned in advance.

Recommendations / residual negative effects	Council Response
	In addition, requirements have been inserted into site policies to require the Provision a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) within site allocation policies. This is supplemented by policy HW3: which seeks to limit development which could have a detrimental impact on health including from noise, vibration, light and odour and HW5 which seeks to minimise affects associated with air quality effects. Policy ENV1 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity) seeks to retain key ecological features on site and create new habitats and linkages to ensure sites make a positive contribution to the natural environment and protects natural greenspace which may be important to the wellbeing of local communities.
Landscape Cumulative effects around Blaby, Countesthorpe, Huncote, and Cosby could erode village character, and the two strategic sites - Stoney Stanton and Whetstone Pastures - pose the greatest risk due to their scale	The Plan includes a thematic policy considering Landscape and Settlement Character. This requires that key landscape elements within developments sites are retained and any recommendation in the Council's landscape sensitivity work are adhered to in order that developments protect and enhance the setting of individual settlements. In addition, site based policies also include specific requirements to help mitigate landscape effects.

Recommendations / residual negative effects	Council Response
Air Quality Planned growth will likely contribute to congestion and on site dust generation during the construction of sites and localised air-quality deterioration is possible.	Evidence gathered to understand the impacts of the plan indicates that national policy changes will likely improve air quality over the course of the Plan period at a district level. However, in some areas there may be a localised deterioration in air quality as a result of new development. To address this issue the Council requires the submission of Construction Environment Management Plans alongside development proposals. In addition Policies HW3 Ground Conditions, Pollution and Health and HW5 (Air Quality) have been included in the plan to try and reduce likely air quality impacts.
Congestion Minor negative effects are predicted in respect of congestion. This could have an impact on local accessibility and air quality.	The Plan seeks to promote accessibility by a wide range of modes and in particular is seeking to encourage the internalisation of trips on larger sites by seeking to retain residents within sites by providing services within the development. In particular the strategic sites policies (S7-S12) have been drafted to include the provision of new services and facilities on site as well as new active travel infrastructure. Policies to encourage modal shift including INF4: Sustainable Travel in New Developments, INF5: Active and Healthy Travel and INF6: Public Transport are also set out in the plan.

Recommendations / residual negative effects	Council Response
Historic environment Whetstone pastures contains a listed building. It is unclear whether this would be lost as a result of development. Whilst the accompanying site policy requires heritage and archaeological assessments to be prepared, there remains some potential for this asset to be lost if it is deemed 'acceptable'. A firm requirement to ensure that the building is not permanently lost would strengthen the policy in this respect, whilst allowing flexibility for impacts on setting to be addressed through a site specific heritage assessment.	The policy has been amended to reflect this comment and the policy now states that the listed building (Whetstone Pastures Residential Care Home list entry No. 1386063) is to be retained as part of the development.

11. Monitoring and next steps

11.1 Monitoring

- 11.1.1 There is a requirement to outline the measures envisaged to monitor the predicted effects of a local plan. In particular, there is a need to focus on the significant effects that are identified.
- 11.1.2 Table 11.1 sets out draft monitoring measures under each SA topic which are intended to be used to monitor any significant effects and to track the baseline position more generally.
- 11.1.3 At this stage the monitoring measures have not been finalised, as there is a need to confirm the feasibility of collecting information for the proposed measures. The monitoring measures will be finalised once the Plan is adopted, and will be set out in a Sustainability Appraisal Statement in accordance with the SEA Regulation.
- 11.1.4 Wherever possible, measures have been drawn from the Local Plan monitoring framework to reduce duplication and to aid in future data collection.

Table 11.1 Proposed SA monitoring indicators

SA Topic and summary of effects	Proposed monitoring measures
Health Significant positive effects ✓✓ Minor negative effects ✕	Proposals benchmarked against Building for Healthy Life Framework 2020 Number of units completed for specialist accommodation (sheltered/ retirement housing, extra care housing) Number of accessible homes built to M4(2) and M4(3) standards: Development granted on existing open space, sport and recreation facilities.
Population and housing Significant positive effects ✓✓	Net additional homes provided (and gross) Supply of ready to develop housing sites (5yHls) Number and Percentage of new affordable homes completed Number of self-build and custom housebuilding plots marketed and delivered

	Number of rural exception sites granted permission Number of new permanent Gypsy and Traveller pitches provided Number of new plots for Travelling Show Persons
Biodiversity and Geodiversity Minor positive ✓	Number of Local Wildlife Sites Number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in favourable and unfavourable condition Number of Local Nature Reserves and number of which that have a management plan. Number of Regionally Important Geological Site
Cultural Heritage Neutral	Number of Listed Buildings Numbers of Historic Parks and Gardens Number of Scheduled Monuments Number of Conservation Areas
Waste Neutral	Proportion of sites approved planning permission including a requirement for submission of a Construction Environment Management Plan. (Measured on major sites only)
Minerals Neutral	Number of objections from the Mineral Planning Authority on Minerals Sterilisation grounds (Major schemes only).
Landscape Minor negative ✖	On site tree canopy cover at site maturity Area (in Ha) of Green Blue Infrastructure delivered through major developments
Soil Significant negative ✖✖	Area of soils lost to built development (measured annually on completion of sites (major sites only) Proportion of sites meeting density requirements as set out in Policy H3. Measured on completion major sites only)
Water quality Neutral	Number of planning permissions granted contrary to Environment Agency or Lead Local Flood Authority advice

Air quality Uncertain minor negative ✖?	Number of Air Quality Management Areas
Climate Change Mitigation Minor positive ✖	Greenhouse Gas/Carbon Dioxide emissions per capita (industry, sector, and transport) Surface water runoff from new development to be restricted to QBar greenfield rate minus 20%
Climate Change resilience Minor positive ✖	New Dwellings adherence to BR G2 Water efficiency standards On site tree canopy cover on major development sites (at site maturity)
Economy Significant positive ✓✓	Gross additional floorspace provided. Amount of key employment land/ floorspace enhanced/redeveloped and extended within Key employment sites Loss of floorspace on Key Employment Sites Loss of employment land (floorspace) on other employment sites (not designated KES)
Congestion Minor negative ✖	Number of major developments that contribute towards highway capacity improvements.
Sustainable travel Uncertain Significant positive ✓✓?	Proportion of developments that contribute towards the delivery of identified LCWIP routes Proportion of major developments within 400m of a new or existing bus service

11.2 Next steps

- 11.2.1 This SA Report has been prepared to accompany the Regulation 19 version of the Blaby Local Plan. The report draws together all the SA outputs that have been prepared to date.
- 11.2.2 Consultation will be undertaken under Regulation 19, but the focus will be on the soundness of the Plan, rather than the direction it should take and the issues it should focus on.
- 11.2.3 The final Plan will be 'Submitted' for Examination in Public (EiP). The Council will also submit a summary of issues raised (if any) through representations at the Publication stage so that these can be considered by the Government appointed Planning Inspector who will oversee the EiP. At the end of the EiP, the Inspector will judge whether or not the Plan is 'sound'.
- 11.2.4 Further SA work may be required to support the Plan-making process as it moves through Examination (for example the preparation of SA Addendums to deal with changes / modifications).