

Local Development Framework

Submission Core Strategy 2008

Non Technical Summary of the Final Sustainability Appraisal Report

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Contents

Huntingdonshire LDF | Non-technical Summary of the Final SA Report: Submission Core Strategy 2008

1	Introduction	1
2	Context of the Sustainability Appraisal	3
3	Methodology	5
4	Likely Effects	10
5	Future Stages	19

Background

1.1 The Local Development Framework (LDF) is the emerging development plan for Huntingdonshire. LDFs are the new form of plan making to guide the way in which land is used introduced by the Government's reforms to the planning system in 2004. The LDF, once adopted, will guide new development in the District for the period up to 2026. This Non Technical Summary relates to the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) which forms the lead document of the LDF.

Purpose of Sustainability Appraisal

1.2 A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Sustainability Appraisal (SA) have to be carried out on Local Development Documents (LDDs) produced as part of the LDF in order to meet the requirements of planning legislation⁽ⁱ⁾ and Government guidance⁽ⁱⁱ⁾. SA guidance recommends that the two requirements are met through one process. This SA incorporates both the SA and SEA requirements, and throughout the document these two processes will be referred to as 'Sustainability Appraisal' (SA). Its overarching aim is to achieve sustainable development and to see whether implementation of the plan that is being assessed is likely to have any significant environmental, social or economic effects. If significant negative effects are identified, recommendations are made as to how these can be avoided, offset or reduced. Recommendations are also made on how to enhance beneficial effects. A programme to monitor significant effects is also required.

1.3 This document forms the Non Technical Summary (NTS) of the SA Report and provides a summary, in non technical language, of the principal findings of the Final SA for the Core Strategy Submission Report. The SA has been completed in house by members of the Development Plans Team.

1.4 The purpose of the SA was to assist Huntingdonshire District Council's Development Plan Team prepare its Core Strategy Submission DPD for consultation by carrying out the following:

- Identifying the key sustainability issues facing the District
- Assessing the likely effects of the Preferred Options on these issues
- Putting forward recommendations that might mitigate against these effects

1.5 The assessment for the Core Strategy DPD to date has comprised four stages as follows:

- Determining the key issues upon which the SA should focus and setting and agreeing sustainability objectives, a process known as 'Scoping'
- Appraisal of the Core Strategy issues and potential policy options, referred to as the 'Initial SA' carried out for the Issues and Options Report (July 2007) and a further Issues and Options consultation document Towards A Spatial Strategy for Huntingdonshire which looked at specific issues raised through the previous consultation;
- Appraisal of the Core Strategy DPD Preferred Options (draft Final SA November 2007); and
- Appraisal of the Submission Core Strategy DPD (this report)

How to comment

1.6 The Final SA report is available to comment on online from 4 July to 15 August 2008. It forms part of the evidence base that the Planning Inspectorate will refer to in order to assess whether or not the Core Strategy is 'sound' and can be adopted by the Council. Comments can be made interactively online, via Huntingdonshire District Council's website. Alternatively, you can download a copy of the response form from the Council's website

i Sections 18 & 19 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

ii Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents, ODPM 2005 (hereafter referred to as 'SA guidance')

Introduction

Huntingdonshire LDF | Non-technical Summary of the Final SA Report: Submission Core Strategy 2008

and email it to ldf@huntsdc.gov.uk . Forms can also be collected from HDC's Customer Service Centre, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon or from libraries throughout the District or requested by phoning 01480 388431/2/3. Forms can be returned by post to:

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Context of the Sustainability Appraisal

Huntingdonshire LDF | Non-technical Summary of the Final SA Report: Submission Core Strategy 2008

Outline of the Content of the Core Strategy

2.1 The Core Strategy is intended to set the framework for Huntingdonshire's future to 2026. It provides a portrait of the District as it currently is and sets out the context within which its future is to be planned. The Core Strategy provides a Spatial Vision for Huntingdonshire and a series of objectives which summarise the key policy directions of the document. It contains policies to guide development of residential, employment and retail properties and for greenspace enhancement. It also contains details of the infrastructure requirements to deliver development targets, a housing trajectory and information on how this will all be monitored to check targets and standards are being met.

2.2 The Core Strategy has been developed in the context of national planning guidance and the regional guidance in the form of the East of England Plan the preparation of which was running just ahead of the Core Strategy. The Core Strategy is required to be broadly in line with the East of England Plan; the submission version has been checked for consistency with the East of England Plan which was published in its final form in May 2008. The Core Strategy has also been developed in the framework set by a wide range of local guidance, most importantly the Community Strategy and the emerging Sustainable Community Strategy. Other major influences have been the Cambridgeshire Local Transport Plan, the Housing Strategy for Huntingdonshire, the Local Economic Strategy for Huntingdonshire, Huntingdonshire Environment Strategy and Huntingdonshire Cultural Strategy.

2.3 The Submission Core Strategy is accompanied by a Statement of Consultation which details the continuous stakeholder engagement that has helped to shape the Core Strategy. Annex A to the Statement of Consultation records the development of policies, including results from public participation, conclusions drawn from the the SA process (including Initial Sustainability Appraisal and the draft Final SA) as well as results of Appropriate Assessment where relevant and the changes made from moving from Preferred Options to Submission. It provides a full audit trail of the Core Strategy's development.

Key sustainability issues facing the District

2.4 The key sustainability issues are identified in section 4 of the Scoping Report (2007). They are summarised below:

Land, water and resources

- Growth pressures on Greenfield land
- Strain placed on water supply by additional development

Biodiversity

- The impact of new development on biodiversity

Landscape, townscape and archaeology

- New development needs to maintain and enhance the District's historic and architectural heritage

Climate change and pollution

- High risk of flooding in some areas
- Pattern of development has encouraged car usage leading to pollution being a problem in some areas
- Development will place increased demand on existing landfill sites and household waste processing centres
- Development will increase the demand on energy from non renewable energy sources

Healthy communities

Context of the Sustainability Appraisal

Huntingdonshire LDF | Non-technical Summary of the Final SA Report: Submission Core Strategy 2008

- Need to reduce health inequalities across the District
- Pressure put on existing open space by new development

Inclusive communities

- High average house prices are pricing key workers/first time buyers out of the area
- Limited access to services and facilities in some rural areas

Economic activity

- High incidence of out-commuting

Scoping

3.1 The aim of the scoping stage is to determine the key environmental, social and economic issues arising the District and the framework for assessing the plans. The SEA Regulations (incorporated into the SA process) require that the following topics are investigated in order to determine whether the introduction of the policies will have significant effects on these topic areas:

- Biodiversity, fauna and flora
- Population and human health
- Water and soil
- Air
- Climate Factors
- Cultural heritage and landscape

3.2 In addition to these “SEA topics” other social and economic factors are taken into account.

3.3 The Council, in partnership with South Cambridgeshire District Council and Scott Wilson Ltd produced a Scoping Report in 2005. This Scoping Report has recently been up-dated and revised to be in accordance with SA guidance and the SA Objectives slightly modified in order to try and simplify the SA process.

SA Objectives

3.4 A series of SA objectives have been developed which were used to assess the Core Strategy as it evolved. These are:

Table 3.1 Sustainability Appraisal Objectives

Sustainability Topic / SEA Topic	SA Objective	Decision aiding questions
Land, water and resources <i>Soil and water</i>	1. Minimise development on Greenfieldland and maximise development on land with the least environmental/ amenity value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will it use land that has been previously developed? • Will it use land efficiently? • Will it protect the best and most versatile agricultural land?
	2. Minimise the use of water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will it reduce water consumption? • Will it conserve ground water resources?
Biodiversity <i>Biodiversity fauna and flora</i>	3. Protect, maintain and enhance biodiversity & green infrastructure and maximise opportunities for biodiversity & green infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will it help achieve Biodiversity Action Plan Targets? • Will it conserve species, reverse their decline and help to enhance diversity? • Will it reduce habitat fragmentation? • Will it protect sites designated for their nature conservation interest?

Methodology

Huntingdonshire LDF | Non-technical Summary of the Final SA Report: Submission Core Strategy 2008

Landscape, townscape and archaeology <i>Cultural heritage and landscape</i>	4. Maintain, protect and enhance the distinctiveness of the built environment (including archaeological heritage) and historic landscape character?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will it protect or enhance sites, features or areas of historical, archaeological, or cultural interest (including conservation areas, listed buildings, historic parks and gardens and scheduled ancient monuments)? • Will it maintain and enhance the diversity and distinctiveness of landscape and townscape character? • Will it maintain and enhance the character of settlements?
	5. Creation of an attractive environment through high quality of design and use of sustainable construction methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will it improve the satisfaction of people with their neighbourhoods as places to live? • Will it lead to developments built to a high standard of design?
Climate change and pollution <i>Climate factors & Air</i>	6. Manage and minimise flood risk taking into account climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will it minimise risk to people and property from flooding, storm events or subsidence? • Will it improve the adaptability of buildings to changing temperatures?
	7. Reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and other pollutants (for example air, water, soil, noise, vibration and light)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will it reduce emissions of greenhouse gases? • Will it improve air quality? • Will it reduce traffic volumes? • Will it reduce levels of noise or noise concerns? • Will it reduce or minimise light pollution? • Will it reduce, diffuse and point source water pollution?
	8. Reduce waste and encourage re-use and recycling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will it reduce household waste? • Will it increase waste recovery and recycling?
	9. Reduce the need to travel and promote sustainable modes of transport (public transport, cycle routes, footpaths and bridleways)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will it increase accessibility to cycle routes, footpaths and bridleways? • Will it help improve the quality of cycle routes, footpaths and bridleways?

Methodology

Huntingdonshire LDF | Non-technical Summary of the Final SA Report: Submission Core Strategy 2008

	10. Maximise the use of renewable energy sources and technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it lead to an increased proportion of energy needs being met from renewable sources?
Healthy communities <i>Population and human health</i>	11. Encourage healthy lifestyles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it encourage healthy lifestyles, including travel choices?
	12. Improve the quantity and quality of publicly accessible open space and improve opportunities for people to access wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it increase the quantity and quality of publicly accessible open space? Will it maintain and, where possible, increase the area of high quality green space in the District? Will it protect and enhance open spaces of amenity and recreational value?
	13. Reduce and prevent crime, anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it reduce actual levels of crime? Will it reduce the fear of crime? Will it contribute towards a cohesive community?
Inclusive communities <i>Population and human health</i>	14. Improve the quality, range and accessibility of local services and facilities including education, health, training and leisure opportunities)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it improve the availability of key local services and facilities, including health, education and leisure (shops, post offices, pubs etc)? Will it encourage engagement with community activities and increase the ability of people to influence decisions? Will it improve accessibility by means other than the private car? Will it support and improve public transport?
	15. Redress inequalities related to gender, age, disability, race, faith, sexuality, location and income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it improve relations between people from different backgrounds or social groups? Will it reduce poverty and social exclusion for those areas and groups most affected? Will it promote accessibility for all members of society,

Methodology

Huntingdonshire LDF | Non-technical Summary of the Final SA Report: Submission Core Strategy 2008

		including the elderly and disabled?
	16. Ensure all groups have access to decent, appropriate and affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will it support the provision of a range of house types and sizes, including affordable and key worker housing, to meet the identified needs of all sectors in the community? • Will it reduce the number of unfit homes? • Will it address the particular needs of the travelling community?
Economic activity <i>Economic development</i>	17. Improve access to satisfying work, appropriate to skills, potential and place of residence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will it encourage business development? • Will it support the growth of sectors that offer scopes to reduce out-commuting? • Will it improve access to employment, particularly by means other than the private car? • Will it encourage the rural economy and support farm diversification?
	18. Improve the efficiency, competitiveness, vitality and adaptability of the local economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will it facilitate business development and enhance competitiveness? • Will it enable tourism opportunities to be exploited? • Will it support the vitality and viability of market town centres?

Developing and refining options

Initial Sustainability Appraisal (May - July 2007 & September 2007)

3.5 Initial issues and options were identified for the Core Strategy and assessed in an Initial Sustainability Appraisal which was published for consultation alongside the Issues and Options Report. The Issues and Options Report for the Core Strategy DPD proposed a number of options for achieving the Core Strategy objectives. One of the central requirements of SA is to consider alternative approaches to achieving the objectives of the plan, so that the effects of these alternatives can be assessed. These policy options were assessed against the SA objectives. The purpose of this appraisal was to help guide the Council in choosing preferred options. Consultation responses to the Issues and Options Core Strategy and Initial Sustainability Appraisal led to a further round of consultation on a set of alternative spatial development options on which a shortened SA was carried out. Together they informed plan development and helped the Council move towards refining their preferred options.

Draft Final Sustainability Appraisal of Preferred Options (November 2007 - January 2008)

3.6 A draft Final Sustainability Appraisal was carried out and published for public consultation alongside the Preferred Options in November 2007. This stage of the SA involved predicting the environmental, social and economic effects that were likely to result from the implementation of the preferred options and evaluating the likely effects. Where adverse effects were identified, recommendations were made as to how these could be mitigated. At each stage, outcomes and recommendations of the SA were incorporated into the preparation of the next stage of the Core Strategy to increase its sustainability as it evolved into the submission policies.

Final Sustainability Appraisal of Submission Policies (July - August 2008)

3.7 The policies chosen by the Council for inclusion in the Submission DPD have been appraised against the 18 SA objectives in the Scoping Report (2007). The appraisal has focused on identifying the significant environmental, social and economic effects which may result from implementation of the policies. The approach taken also assists in the evaluation of the cumulative effects that may result from the implementation of the policies. The full assessment of each policy can be found in appendix 2 of the Final SA report, these assessments also contain a commentary which predicts the key short, medium and long terms effects of policies. From Preferred Options to Submission a number of policies have been reworded as a result of consultation responses and the SA process.

3.8 The 'do nothing' scenario has not been assessed as part of this SA as it is considered that it is not a reasonable alternative. Consideration has, however, been given to the likely effects of future evolution without the Core Strategy.

Likely Effects

4.1 The table below summarises the likely effects of each policy on each of the 18 Sustainability Appraisal objectives. It indicates whether the policy is expected to have a positive, negative or neutral effect where it can be clearly judged, or where it is uncertain and the effect may depend upon details of implementation and mitigation measures adopted.

Table 4.1 Key to summary of assessments

+	Positive effect: policy has been identified as having positive effect against SA objective
-	Negative effect: policy has potentially negative effect against SA objective. Mitigation measure usually recommended
?	Uncertain effect: effect could be positive or negative, mitigation measure(s) may be recommended
~	Neutral effect: no relationship identified between policy or SA objective

Table 4.2 Summary of detailed assessments of Submission policies

Policy	SA Objectives (abridged)																	
	SA1 Land	SA2 Water	SA3 Biodiversity	SA4 Landscape	SA5 Environment	SA6 Flood	SA7 Emissions	SA8 Waste	SA9 Travel	SA10 Energy	SA11 Health	SA12 OS	SA13 Crime	SA14 Services	SA15 Inequalities	SA16 Housing	SA17 Work	SA18 Economy
V01	+	~	+	+	~	?	?	~	+	~	+	+	~	+	~	~	+	+
C01	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	?	+	+	?	?
C02	?	-	?	?	?	+	+	-	+	~	+	?	~	+	+	+	~	~
C03	+	~	~	?	?	~	+	-	+	~	~	?	~	+	+	+	+	+
C04	?	~	~	~	+	~	+	-	~	~	+	?	~	~	+	+	~	~
C05	+	~	~	~	~	~	?	-	?	~	~	?	~	+	+	+	~	~
C06	-	~	~	?	-	+	+	-	+	~	~	~	~	+	+	+	~	~
C07	?	~	?	~	~	+	?	-	?	~	?	?	~	+	?	~	+	+
C08	?	~	?	+	+	+	+	-	+	~	+	?	~	+	+	~	~	+
C09	~	~	+	+	~	~	~	~	~	~	+	+	~	~	~	~	+	+
C10	~	~	+	-	~	+	~	+	+	~	~	+	-	+	+	+	~	~

4.2 The policies in the Submission Core Strategy have been found to be sustainable. They demonstrate the Council's commitment to accommodating the required growth in a sustainable way which prioritises sustainable brownfield land. It is however, recognised that a significant proportion of development will have to be accommodated on greenfield land, although the greenfield development opportunities indicated are in the most sustainable and accessible locations, close to good public transport links. The Council's strategic housing policy seeks to concentrate development in the Market Towns thus reducing the need to travel. Development is also promoted to a lesser degree in Key Service Centres in order to maximise sustainable brownfield opportunities and help reduce rural inequalities. The importance of conserving and enhancing settlement character is recognised in the settlement hierarchy which indicates the scale of development acceptable in settlement's and is based on the services they provide.

4.3 The employment and retail policies complement and reinforce the strategic housing development policy and concentrates development in the Market Towns where there is a strong market preference. The Council's strategy ensures that a balance between housing growth and jobs growth is achieved and that development will always be accompanied by the necessary infrastructure provision.

4.4 The Council's commitment to improving the environment of the District is emphasised throughout the Core Strategy, but is particularly evident in the policy on Strategic Greenspace Enhancement. This policy ensures that the areas identified are conserved and enhanced so that the environmental quality of the District is maintained. It is also recognised that areas outside of the areas identified are important. Promoting greenspace is also important for encouraging healthy lifestyles as it provides opportunities for people to engage in recreational activities such as walking and cycling. It is also good for promoting biodiversity. There may also be potential benefits for promoting tourism as is the case with the Great Fen Project.

4.5 Development will bring an increase in water consumption and waste generation in absolute terms, hence in most cases there is a negative assessment of those policies which direct growth against these objectives. It is however recognised that waste generation can be mitigated against through design policies in the emerging Development Control Policies and Design Guide SPD but will also require other awareness raising programmes to encourage recycling carried out by the Council and its partners. In terms of reducing water consumption a number of mitigation measures can be used, in particular the improvement in Building Regulations which requires water efficient measures to be incorporated. It is also recognised that, although not a primary aim of the affordable housing policy, there is a requirement for affordable housing to meet level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes which helps ensure water and energy efficiency of new affordable homes.

4.6 A number of uncertain effects are identified throughout the assessment process and these are explained fully in the detailed assessment sheets in appendix 2. The uncertain effects arise as there could be positive and/or negative effects associated with the assessment of policies against the SA objectives. For example, development may place pressure on areas of open space both as potential sites for development but also through additional use as a result of increased population. However, development also brings opportunities to improve existing areas of open space or create new areas through planning contributions. Policies CS1 and CS10 can help mitigate against pressure on open space. These policies are supported by emerging policies on open space in the Development Control Policies DPD will help protect against the unacceptable loss of open space and ensure that appropriate provision of new areas is made as a result of development. Thus, an uncertain effect is identified in most cases when assessing policies which direct growth against the SA objective 12.

Comparison of the Social, Environmental and Economic Effects of Policies

4.7 Each policy carries with it social, environmental and economic effects, some of which may be similar and overlap, and others may differ considerably. Each effect has been assessed against the SA objectives using the decision aiding questions identified to help identify priorities. The following table provides a summary of the main social, environmental and economic identified through the detailed assessments of each policy.

Likely Effects

Table 4.4 Summary of main social, economic and environmental effects of policies

Policy approach	Effects		
	Social	Environmental	Economic
<p>Spatial vision Provides the overarching goals that the Core Strategy policies will contribute to and sets out how the District will change till 2026</p>	<p>Seeks to improve the quality of life for residents and improve access to jobs and housing and</p> <p>Sets spatial priorities for concentrating the majority of growth in the most sustainable market towns of St Neots, Huntingdon and St Ives and ensuring any growth in key service centres is sustainable and proportionate to size and facilities available</p>	<p>Sets out a commitment to retain the predominantly rural identity of the District and improve green infrastructure</p> <p>Concentrates growth towards brownfield locations</p> <p>Where Greenfield development is necessary, directs growth towards the most sustainable locations</p> <p>Emphasises the commitment to protecting and enhancing the countryside of the District and identifies specific areas for enhancement</p>	<p>Looks to take advantage of the economic vitality of the Cambridge Sub Region</p> <p>Identifies opportunities for maximising retail development in the market towns and key service centres to strengthen the economy</p> <p>Sets out priorities for employment development</p>
<p>Spatial objectives Summarise key policy directions and provides the basis for monitoring framework</p>	<p>Emphasises the need to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide housing to meet local needs including affordable housing encourage healthy lifestyles through providing improved recreation opportunities and 	<p>Sets out objectives relating to conservation and enhancement of landscapes, habitats and species; conserving natural resources and reducing waste</p> <p>Emphasises the need to minimise flood risk and the effects caused by climate change and ensure that the District</p>	<p>Includes objectives which emphasise the vitality and viability of the District's town centres</p> <p>Promotes rural development to provide local jobs</p> <p>Emphasises the need to facilitate local job creation to limit out commuting</p>

Likely Effects

Huntingdonshire LDF | Non-technical Summary of the Final SA Report: Submission Core Strategy 2008

Policy approach	Effects		
	Social	Environmental	Economic
	<p>improvements to cycle routes and footpaths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> for development to integrate with its setting and promotes local distinctiveness 	<p>is adaptable to the effects of climate change</p>	
<p>Sustainable development Sets out criteria, against which proposals will be assessed, to promote achievement of sustainable development</p>	<p>Promotes social cohesion and the creation of attractive places that are accessible and safe</p> <p>Emphasises the need to limit travel and increase opportunities for sustainable modes of transport as part of promoting healthy lifestyles</p>	<p>Promotes the need to protect and enhance the natural and built environment to reflect local distinctiveness</p> <p>Seeks to reduce green-house gas emissions; make efficient use of land; preserve diversity of the District's towns and villages and promote the vitality of habitats and species</p>	<p>Promotes sustainable economic development linked to developing local skills</p>
<p>Strategic Housing Development Defines spatial planning areas and where strategic growth will be accommodated across the District</p>	<p>Identifies spatial planning areas on the basis of relationships between settlements. This areas are the most sustainable locations in which to accommodate growth and have the best level of services and facilities which will help reduce the need to travel</p> <p>Strategic growth in each of the spatial planning areas will contribute to the provision of affordable housing, with development in the St Neots spatial</p>	<p>In each of the spatial planning areas identified there are brownfield opportunities. Proposed growth in the St Neots spatial planning area has a high reliance on Greenfield development</p> <p>but also uses all available brownfield opportunities within St Neots</p> <p>Huntingdon spatial planning area makes the best use of land and uses all available brownfield</p>	<p>The spatial planning areas facilitate the provision of retail and employment development in the most sustainable and accessible locations</p>

Likely Effects

Huntingdonshire LDF | Non-technical Summary of the Final SA Report: Submission Core Strategy 2008

Policy approach	Effects		
	Social	Environmental	Economic
	<p>planning area likely to facilitate provision of the highest level of affordable housing. Similarly, development in this spatial planning area will also create significant opportunities for contributions towards provision of infrastructure, although development in all the areas identified will facilitate contributions</p>	<p>opportunities within this area although does rely on a level of Greenfield development</p>	
<p>Settlement Hierarchy Sets out a framework to manage the scale of unallocated growth</p>	<p>Concentrates development in larger settlements offering the best levels of services – this will help reduce the need to travel and ensure development is accessible</p>	<p>Seeks to maximise brownfield development as far as possible by directed growth towards larger settlements</p>	<p>Enhances the vitality and viability of sustainable centres across the District</p> <p>Encourages employment development in the most sustainable and accessible locations to help minimise out commuting</p>
<p>Affordable Housing Defines affordable housing, sets the target to be achieved across the District and the categories where it will be required</p>	<p>Primary objective – promotes the creation of diverse and mixed communities</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Enables more people to live in the District which will help to sustain the economy (eg through Council Tax paid, monies spent)</p>
<p>Rural Housing Policy Provides for affordable housing development in small rural communities subject to criteria</p>	<p>Enables local people to remain in their community</p> <p>Generates critical mass to sustain local services</p>	<p>Scale of development is likely to be small therefore environmental impacts are limited</p>	<p>Promotes the rural economy as it enables local people to work and live in their local community</p> <p>Helps to sustain local services</p>

Policy approach	Effects		
	Social	Environmental	Economic
<p>Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling showpeople Defines criteria to guide the provision of sites for this community</p>	<p>Prevents social exclusion of Gypsies and Travellers by providing pitches in appropriate locations</p> <p>Recognises the need to promote good relationships between settled communities and Traveller community</p> <p>Ensures provision of pitches in sustainable locations with good access by foot, cycle or public transport to services</p>	<p>Protects against inappropriate provision of pitches in areas of flood risk and on adjoining land uses/landscape value</p>	<p>Promotes opportunities for the traveller community to contribute to the economy</p>
<p>Employment land Identifies the scale of employment development to be achieved and defines spatial priorities for its provision</p>	<p>Directs employment provision to the most sustainable and accessible locations in the District (concentrating growth in St Neots and Huntingdon spatial planning areas) thereby limiting out commuting</p> <p>Encourages creation of sustainable, mixed communities – majority of growth is to be provided as part of mixed use development within St Neots and Huntingdon spatial planning areas</p>	<p>Promotes brownfield employment development . Where Greenfield development is necessary it's directed towards the most sustainable and accessible locations</p>	<p>Primary objective – provision of local employment opportunities strengthens the District's economy and helps limit out-commuting</p>

Likely Effects

Huntingdonshire LDF | Non-technical Summary of the Final SA Report: Submission Core Strategy 2008

Policy approach	Effects		
	Social	Environmental	Economic
	Provides opportunities for regeneration in Ramsey		
Retail land for development Identifies the scale of comparison and convenience floorspace and determines spatial priorities for distribution	Directs development towards town centres which will enhance the diversity of uses and contribute to the creation of sustainable, mixed communities	Minimises Greenfield development as growth is directed towards town centres – where Greenfield development will occur it is in the most sustainable and accessible locations	Enhances the vitality and viability of town centres and increases competitiveness (of Huntingdon) against other higher order centres eg Cambridge
Strategic Greenspace Enhancement Identifies areas for enhancement and determines the action to promote landscape, ecological and recreational value in these areas	Provides recreational opportunities to promote healthy lifestyles Enhances areas of Greenspace and improves accessibility which contributes to physical and psychological well being	Primary objective – promotes habitat creation, biodiversity and green corridors	Provides opportunities for tourism
Infrastructure Requirements Identifies appropriate forms of infrastructure for which contributions may be sought as part of development	Primary objective through seeking contributions to eg community facilities	Primary objective through seeking contributions to eg open space and strategic greenspace enhancement	Indirectly supportive through contributing to transport provision

Likely future state of the environment in the absence of the Core Strategy

4.8 As identified in the above table the Core Strategy policies will have significant social, environmental and economic effects. Without the Core Strategy in place, the following issues are likely to be affected:

Land, water and resources

4.9 The Core Strategy offers clear support for reducing development on Greenfield land through its spatial strategy. However, it is recognised in the DPD that a significant proportion of development will be on Greenfield land. The Core Strategy has ensured that the Greenfield land identified is in the most sustainable locations. Without the Core Strategy, more Greenfield development in less sustainable locations may occur.

Biodiversity

4.10 The inclusion of policy CS9 indicates clear support for protecting and enhancing biodiversity. Policy CS9 identifies areas of strategic greenspace enhancement and seeks to link habitats to provide continuous green corridors. This is important in order to protect habitats and thereby promote biodiversity. Without this policy habitat fragmentation may continue in the District. The Appropriate Assessment (AA) which accompanies the Submission Core Strategy shows how potential impacts on Natura 2000 sites have been taken into account in developing the Core Strategy. It concludes that there may be impacts relating to recreational pressure on three sites within and outside of the District. The proposed mitigation measures have been incorporated into the Submission Core Strategy.

Landscape, townscape and archaeology

4.11 The Core Strategy seeks to preserve and enhance the District's historic landscape, townscape and sites of archaeological interest in general through the objectives and policy CS1. Townscape character is specifically addressed by the broader settlement hierarchy and the spatial policies on employment and, to a lesser degree, housing. These policies aim to structure land use changes so that development is concentrated in the most accessible locations, avoiding piecemeal growth. Preserving and enhancing landscape character is addressed principally through policy CS9 Strategic Greenspace Enhancement however, other emerging policies in the Development Control Policies DPD may also impact upon this objective. Without the Core Strategy more piecemeal growth may occur and habitat fragmentation would be exacerbated.

Climate change and pollution

4.12 One of the most difficult objectives to quantify with indicators is the relationship between climate change and planning. Tackling climate change is a key theme which underpins the Core Strategy and there are specific objectives relating to climate change and criterion related to climate change in policy CS1. The spatial strategy seeks to locate development in the most accessible and sustainable locations thereby reducing the need to travel and associated emissions which contribute to climate change and policy CS9 provides enhanced greenspace to help contribute to a reduction in climate change. The Core Strategy provides ways to reduce climate change through locally distinctive planning policies. Although climate change is covered by national and regional guidance and building regulations, without the Core Strategy strategic development in the District may not be located as sustainably which may increase the need to travel. Further detail on renewable energy will be provided through the emerging Development Control Policies DPD.

Healthy Communities

4.13 Although the extent to which the Core Strategy has direct control of facilitating healthy communities and lifestyles is limited, policies which can help influence lifestyle behaviour include policy CS9 and policy CS10 - specifically relating to provision of open space as part of planning contributions. Reducing the need to travel and promoting sustainable travel underpins the spatial strategy by ensuring strategic development is located in accessible locations. Further detail on the provision of open space and recreational facilities will be given in the emerging Development Control Policies DPD.

Inclusive Communities

Likely Effects

Huntingdonshire LDF | Non-technical Summary of the Final SA Report: Submission Core Strategy 2008

4.14 As with healthy communities, the extent to which the Core Strategy has direct control over facilitating inclusive communities is somewhat limited. However, it does attempt to address some aspects of this, for example, through provision of affordable housing, requiring planning contributions and locating development in locations easily accessible by public transport, foot and cycle. Without the Core Strategy it is likely that affordability issues may increase, strategic development may not be located sustainably and it would be more difficult to obtain appropriate contributions.

Economic Activity

4.15 Strategic employment development has been located so as to help reducing levels of out-commuting and facilitate the creation of sustainable, balanced communities. Without the Core Strategy, it is assumed that the high levels of out-commuting would continue and development would not be balanced i.e. there would be just provision of housing without the necessary infrastructure such as employment to accompany it.

Mitigation measures

4.16 SA Guidance requires that all measures should be considered to prevent, reduce or offset any significant negative effects that have been identified during the assessment process.

4.17 In nearly every case where negative effects have been identified during the assessment process the SA has put forward mitigation measures required to prevent or reduce the severity of this effect. For example, the draft Final SA proposed a mitigation measures of re-wording of policy 1 sustainable development to include more detail on social and economic objectives. This mitigation measure was taken forward into the Submission Core Strategy and CS1 now includes the relevant information on social and economic objectives.

4.18 In the majority of cases, proposed mitigation measures or recommendations focus on policy re-wording, it can however include proposing additional policies to combat the negative effects of others or other Local Development Documents implementing mitigation measures e.g. Development Control Policies DPD.

Monitoring

4.19 Significant effects identified by the sustainability appraisal should be monitored to highlight specific performance issues and lead to informed decision making in the future to respond to any adverse effects.

4.20 Therefore, the Final SA Report includes a draft monitoring framework of appropriate indicators. The final agreed list of indicators will be provided in the Statement produced upon adoption of the DPD.

5.1 The Core Strategy has now been finalised for submission to the Secretary of State for an independent examination. The Final Sustainability Appraisal Report provides part of the evidence base and will be used to assess the soundness of the DPD.

5.2 Following the examination, the Planning Inspector will produce a report with recommendations which will be binding upon the Local Planning Authority. Where the Inspector suggests significant changes in the binding report, the SA must be amended by the Planning Authority to show these changes have been appraised.

5.3 The information in the SA Report and responses to final consultation must be taken into account during the preparation of the DPD and before it is adopted. Then, an adoption statement will be produced, to accompany the adopted Core Strategy outlining:

- How the findings of SA have been taken into account
- How sustainability in general has been integrated into the plan
- Changes to the DPD as a result of the SA process
- Responses to consultation
- How monitoring will be carried out.