

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) for the South Kesteven Local Plan 2011-2036

SA Report to accompany the Regulation 19 consultation
on the Local Plan

Non-Technical Summary

South Kesteven District Council

Quality information

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent Sustainability Appraisal (SA) in support of the emerging South Kesteven Local Plan 2011-2036. Once adopted, the South Kesteven Local Plan will set out the framework to guide and shape development in the District to 2036. The new Local Plan will replace the existing planning policies in the South Kesteven Local Development Framework Core Strategy and Site Allocation and Policies Development Plan Document, as well as the remaining 'saved' policies from the 1995 South Kesteven Local Plan. The new Local Plan identifies sites for housing and employment, and sets out the development management policies and infrastructure requirements against which planning applications will be determined.
- 1.2 SA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and alternatives, with a view to avoiding and mitigating adverse effects and maximising the potential for positive effects. SA for Local Plans is a legal requirement and must be undertaken in line with the European Union (EU) Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive.
- 1.3 At this stage, the South Kesteven Local Plan 2011-2036 is published for representations in line with Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The SA Report is published alongside this, and aims to inform consultation responses, and subsequent plan-making work. This is a Non-Technical Summary (NTS) of the SA Report.

Structure of the SA Report / this NTS

- 1.4 Sustainability Appraisal reporting essentially involves answering the following questions in turn:
1. What has plan-making / SA involved up to this point?
 2. What are the appraisal findings at this current stage?
 3. What are the next steps?
- 1.5 Each of these questions is answered in turn below. Firstly though there is a need to set the scene further by answering an initial question; *'What's the scope of the SA?'*

The scope of the SA

- 1.6 The scoping process is the first stage in the SA process, and aims to:
- Define the broader context for the Local Plan and associated SA through summarising the regulatory and legislative landscape;
 - Establish the baseline for the SA (i.e. the current and future situation in South Kesteven District) in the absence of the Local Plan) in order to help identify the plan's likely significant effects;
 - Identify particular issues that should be a particular focus of the SA; and
 - Develop an SA framework comprising objectives and appraisal questions on the basis of the identified issues, which can then be used to appraise the plan.

- 1.7 The scoping process was undertaken in 2015 and is essentially reflected in a list of sustainability objectives. Taken together these objectives indicate the parameters of the SA, and provide a framework for appraisal.

Table 1.1: SA themes and objectives (the SA framework)

SA Theme	SA Objective(s)
Biodiversity and geodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To protect / enhance the District's natural assets and biodiversity
Natural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conserve water resources, ensure no deterioration and promote improvements in water quality ■ Maintain air quality within the District ■ Maximise the use of previously developed land ■ Ensure development utilises land with the lowest agricultural value first ■ Minimise waste and encourage the re-use, recycling and recovery of waste materials
Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Support climate change mitigation through sustainable design and by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving energy efficiency and developing renewable energy solutions ■ Reduce the risk of, and damage arising from, flooding
Historic Environment and landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Conserve and enhance the historic environment, heritage assets and their settings ■ Protect and enhance the character and appearance of the local landscape and townscape and ensures new development is of a high quality which reflects local distinctiveness
Population and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure that the housing needs of all groups in society are met through the provision of decent, appropriate and affordable housing ■ Improve the quality and accessibility of social and community services and facilities to meet the needs of residents and visitors ■ Reduce the need to travel and promote necessary infrastructure improvements and sustainable modes of transport (walking, cycling and public transport)
Health and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Improve the quantity and quality of publicly accessible open and natural green space and promote strategic green infrastructure networks to link to it ■ Promote communities which encourage and support physical activity and healthy lifestyles ■ Create safe places for people to live in, work in and visit through the design and location of new development
Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Create and improve access to high quality employment and training opportunities for everyone ■ Improve the efficiency, competitiveness, vitality and viability of the local economy, including the rural economy and town centres

2. What has plan-making / SA involved up to this point?

Plan-making up to this point

- 2.1 Preparation of the South Kesteven Local Plan began in 2015, with three consultations having been undertaken to date:
- South Kesteven Local Plan: Regulation 18 Consultation (January 2015)
 - South Kesteven Local Plan: Sites and Settlements Consultation (July 2016)
 - South Kesteven Local Plan: Consultative Draft Local Plan 2017 (July 2017)
- 2.2 This SA / NTS accompanies the 'Regulation 19' consultation on the South Kesteven Local Plan 2011-2036 for representations.

Reasonable alternatives in SA

- 2.3 A key element of the SA process is the appraisal of 'reasonable alternatives' for the Local Plan, which should be undertaken in time to inform development of the draft plan. The assessment of reasonable alternatives was undertaken between 2015 and early 2017, and has informed the preferred spatial strategy (specifically in terms of housing numbers and distribution) for the District and potential locations for proposed development.

Establishing housing numbers to deliver through the Local Plan

- 2.4 In March 2017, a revised estimate of objectively assessed housing need (OAHN) for South Kesteven District was published through an update to the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) (completed in 2014 by GL Hearn) for the Peterborough sub-region (Peterborough, Rutland, South Holland and South Kesteven) and Boston¹. The March 2017 OAHN established a need for in the region of 624 dwellings per annum to be delivered in the District over the period 2011 – 2036. This was a reduction from the 660-710 dwellings per annum previously determined by the 2014 SHMA, and the 635 figure established through the 2015 SHMA update.

Establishing a settlement hierarchy

- 2.5 During the initial stage of the Local Plan preparation, consideration was made as to the role and functions of key settlements in South Kesteven District. This was with a view to establishing a settlement hierarchy for the Local Plan, which would help guide the choice of locations for growth in the District. In particular, it examined whether there are any villages in the District that should move higher in the settlement hierarchy or should no longer remain as a Local Service Centre. Subsequent to this process, Grantham was recognised as the key Sub-Regional Centre in the District. Alongside, the market towns of Stamford, Bourne and The Deepings were recognised as, after Grantham, the most sustainable locations for growth in South Kesteven.

¹ JG Consulting (march 2017) Peterborough Housing Market Area and Boston Borough Council Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update Final Report

The following settlements were also assigned 'Larger Village' status, recognising their roles as service centres, including for surrounding communities and rural areas:

- Ancaster
- Barkston
- Barrowby
- Baston
- Billingborough
- Caythorpe
- Colsterworth
- Corby Glen
- Great Gonerby
- Harlaxton
- Langtoft
- Long Bennington
- Morton
- South Witham
- Thurlby

Potential locations for development

- 2.6 To facilitate consideration of potential locations for site allocations, a number of broad areas around key settlements in the District have been evaluated, with a view to establishing the likely environmental and physical constraints to development in each area. The purpose of this analysis was to aid the consideration of appropriate locations for growth to be taken forward in South Kesteven District for the purposes of the Local Plan. Between 2015 and 2016, capacity studies were undertaken which consider the key constraints in and around the key towns of Grantham, Stamford, Bourne and The Deepings, as well as the identified 15 Larger Villages. In this context, a range of broad areas were proposed by South Kesteven District Council for each settlement, loosely reflecting the various 'points of the compass'. The 'points of the compass' characterisation for the settlement areas are presented in **Part 1 of the Technical Annex accompanying the full SA Report**.

Spatial strategy options

- 2.7 The most recent Housing Needs Assessment established a minimum need to deliver in the region of 624 dwellings per annum between the period 2011 and 2036. Since 2011 there has been a shortfall in delivery, resulting in a level of unmet needs. Alongside this, a review of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has proposed a new standardised methodology for assessing housing needs. These updates are likely to affect the forecasted needs. Therefore, alternative options for the level of growth in the District, which reflect these changing circumstances, were explored through the SA.
- 2.8 The spatial strategy options explored through the SA are identified below.
- **Option 1; 624 dwellings per annum** – according with the housing need established using the current housing needs assessment (HNA) methodology, recognised through the existing NPPF. This includes housing completions since 2011 – the base date utilised through the March 2017 housing needs assessment.
 - **Option 2; 685 dwellings per annum** – to account for a shortfall in housing provision between 2011 and 2018, raising the requirement for the remaining plan period to 686 dwellings per annum. This option sets out a level of growth approximately 12.9% in excess of the minimum objectively assessed housing need. This includes housing completions since 2016 – the base date utilised by the standardised housing needs assessment methodology under the provisions of the revised NPPF currently undergoing consultation.
 - **Option 3; 720 dwellings per annum** – to reflect the housing need figure determined through the new standardised housing needs assessment methodology (784 dwellings per annum) to be implemented through the revised NPPF. This option proposes the

delivery of 785 dwellings per annum between 2016-2026, and 655 dwellings per annum in the latter ten years of the plan period (2026-2036).

- **Option 4; 785 dwellings per annum** – this option reflects the housing need figure determined through the emerging housing needs assessment methodology anticipated to be implemented through revisions to the NPPF.

2.9 Further to this, each of the four options is split into two sub-options which identify a different spatial approach to delivering these housing numbers. These two sub-options are as follows:

- **a) Grantham approach** – this option seeks to support the economic vitality of the north of the District through facilitating an additional level of development in the vicinity of Grantham.
- **b) More permissive approach in the south of the District (more market-led)** – this option reflects the buoyancy of the housing market in the south of the District and the relatively higher number of planning applications in Stamford and other settlements. In this context, the option facilitates the allocation of an additional number of homes in Stamford, Bourne and The Deepings.

2.10 The summary findings for the appraisal of these options are presented below.

Table 2.1: Summary findings for spatial strategy options appraisal

SA Theme	Summary findings
Biodiversity and geodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Effects are largely dependent on the location, scale and nature of development, and the incorporation of biodiversity enhancement measures. ▪ It can be considered that a higher level of housing development in a settlement increases the likelihood (and potential magnitude) of negative effects on the designated sites in the vicinity of the settlement. In this context, Option 4 has increased potential for negative effects of greater magnitude. ▪ Option 4a has increased potential for effects on non-statutory designated biodiversity sites in the vicinity of Grantham compared to the other options considered. ▪ Options 3b, 4a and 4b have the potential to increase the likelihood of effects compared to other options on statutory and non-statutory designated biodiversity sites in the vicinity of Bourne. ▪ Development in Stamford has some potential to affect the internationally designated sites at Rutland Water. The likelihood of effects depends on the location and scale of development sites, and will be considered through the Habitats Regulations Assessment process for the Local Plan. However the market-led approach through Options 1a, 2a, 3a and 4a has greater potential for negative effects on biodiversity in the vicinity of Stamford compared to other options. ▪ Options 4a and 4b have an increased likelihood for effects on statutory and non-statutory designated biodiversity sites in the vicinity of The Deepings. ▪ Development also has the potential to affect SSSIs in the vicinity of Ancaster, Langtoft and Thurlby. Overall though, the options all propose the same level of development across the Larger Villages, and as such, it is not possible to differentiate between the options in terms of likely significant effects. ▪ There is the potential for cumulative effects associated with development in two or more settlements impacting one or more SSSIs. In this respect, there is potential

for in-combination effects associated with development in The Deepings and Langtoft, where development in the settlements may combine to have negative impacts on Langtoft Gravel Pits SSSI, and in Bourne and Thurlby which has the potential for in-combination effects on the Math and Elsea SSSI, located between the two settlements.

Natural
resources

Water Resources and Quality:

- The significance of the effects from each option on water resources and quality largely depends on the location, scale and nature of development and the incorporation of mitigation measures (e.g. SUDs).
- It is considered that a higher level of housing development within a settlement increases the likelihood (and potential magnitude) of negative effects on both surface water and groundwater resources. In this context, Option 4 has increased potential for negative effects compared to the other options.
- Option 4a has increased potential for effects on surface water and groundwater resources in Grantham compared to the other options.
- Options 4a, 3b and 4b have the potential to increase the likelihood of effects on groundwater and surface water resources in Bourne.
- Options 1b, 2b, 3b, and 4b (the market-led approach) has increased potential for negative effects on groundwater and surface water resources in Stamford.
- Option 4b, followed by Options 4a, 3b and 2b have the potential to increase the likelihood of effects on surface water resources in The Deepings.
- Due to the number of watercourses in proximity to all four of the larger towns, as well as the presence of groundwater source protection zones, it is considered that there is a potential for negative effects on surface water quality and groundwater resources for all options without appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures.
- Development could negatively affect water resources in the following Larger Villages; Ancaster, Barkston, Billingborough, Harlaxton, Long Bennington, Baston, Colsterworth, Corby Glen, Langtoft, Morton, South Witham and Thurlby. However, given the options all propose the same level of development across the Larger Villages, at this level of detail it is not possible to differentiate between the options in this regard.
- It is considered that there is potential for cumulative effects to take place associated with development in settlements on the same river in South Kesteven. For example development in Long Bennington, Colsterworth, and South Witham, which are all located along the River Witham, could lead to negative in-combination effects without appropriate avoidance and mitigation measures.

Air Quality:

- The introduction of between 4,320 to 7,794 dwellings in the vicinity of Grantham has the potential to increase traffic and congestion in the town. This may result in the further deterioration of air quality in the AQMA, as well as elsewhere in the town. Option 4a allocates the most housing (7,794 dwellings) and therefore presents the highest likelihood for effects, followed by the rest of the options taken forward through a Grantham approach (Options 1a, 2a, and 3a) which all allocate 4,984 dwellings. However, as the largest town, Grantham has good public transport links, and a wide range of facilities and services, which will help reduce the need to travel from new development areas. In this context development in Grantham has the most potential to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport when compared to the other settlements. This has the potential to support air quality.
- Option 4b, followed by Option 4a and then 3b, presents the highest likelihood for

effects in the vicinity of Bourne or The Deepings.

- The market-led approach (Options 1b, 2b, 3b and 4b) have the most potential for effects in the vicinity of Stamford.
- The cumulative effect of development across the District has the potential to increase road traffic on some key routes.

Land Resources:

- All of the four larger settlements are surrounded by areas of best and most versatile agricultural land. Whilst brownfield sites for development are available, it is unlikely that brownfield sites will accommodate all of the proposed growth. Therefore all options have the potential for negative effects in terms of land and soil resources.
- Option 4a allocates the most housing and therefore presents the highest likelihood for significant effects.
- In Grantham, development to the west and east has the greatest potential for negative effects on the best and most versatile agricultural land, along with development in the east and south-east of Bourne, and any development around The Deepings.
- Option 4b, followed by Option 4a and then 3b, presents a higher likelihood for effects in Bourne and The Deepings.
- The market-led approach (Options 1b, 2b, 3b and 4b) presents a higher likelihood for effects in Stamford.

Waste:

- The generation of waste is an inevitable consequence of development, including both waste generated by construction, as well as waste generated subsequently in occupation. In this context, the higher the level of growth proposed; the higher level of waste that will be generated. As such Options 4a and 4b are likely to lead to the highest increases in the generation of waste in the District.
- Given the legislative and regulatory requirements regarding waste, it is considered that individually development is unlikely to have a significant negative impact on waste; however the cumulative effect of all development on South Kesteven has the potential for significant negative effects if not mitigated or managed.

Climate
change

Climate change mitigation:

- It is considered that development in Grantham, Stamford and Ancaster, all of which have railway stations, have increased potential to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport when compared to the other settlements. This will support lower carbon modes of transport.
- The options all promote an increased level of development in the larger settlements of the District (Grantham, Stamford, Bourne and The Deepings). Given that these are the settlements with the widest range of services and facilities, this will help limit emissions from transport through reducing the need to travel and encouraging lower carbon modes of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport.
- It is recognised that the sustainability performance of development depends on elements such as the integration of energy efficient design within new development and the provision of renewable energy. This however can only be assessed on a site-by-site basis. It should be noted though that the higher quantum of development proposed through Options 4a and 4b will do more to increase the built footprint of South Kesteven District, with associated overall increases in greenhouse gas emissions.

Climate change adaptation:

- Whilst all options have the potential to lead to development within flood zones, or elevated levels of flood risk, it is considered that the provisions of the NPPF and national policy in relation to flooding will help guide development away from flood risk areas and ensure that appropriate mitigation measures are implemented. Likewise, adherence to the recommendations and guidance presented in the SFRA will help limit effects.
- In Grantham, whilst there are areas of significant flood risk, it is considered that development could readily avoid areas at risk of flooding, with negative effects unlikely under any of the options.
- Option 4b, followed by Options 4a and then 3b have the most potential to increase pressures on the flood plain in Bourne and The Deepings.
- The market-led approach (Options 1b, 2b, 3b and 4b) has the most potential to increase pressures on the floodplain in Stamford.
- The options all propose the same level of development across the Larger Villages. The potential scale of development proposed is considered unlikely to increase pressures to build on the floodplain, making significant negative effects under any of the options unlikely.
- In the four largest towns where most development is allocated, the cumulative effect of development in each settlement could result in a change in the provision of hard standing which may lead to an increase in surface water flood risk locally.
- In addition, there is the potential for cumulative effects where development in a number of settlements along the same river will lead to a change to the flow rate to the watercourse and increased risk of flooding. However, due to the requirements in national and local planning policy, it is considered that the cumulative effects will not be significant.

Historic
environment
and
landscape

Cultural, built and archaeological heritage:

- The significance of the effects from each option on features of cultural, built and archaeological heritage assets depends on the location, scale and nature of development.
- It can be considered that a higher level of housing development within a settlement increases the likelihood (and potential magnitude) of negative effects on the heritage assets locally. In this context, Options 4a and 4b are considered to have greater potential for effects given the higher level of development proposed.
- Whilst development has the potential to have negative effects on the fabric and setting of the historic environment, it should also be noted that well sited and high quality design and layout can support enhancements to cultural heritage assets and their settings. As such, effects on the historic environment have the potential to be both positive and negative.
- Development at any of the settlements has the potential to affect designated and non-designated heritage assets and/or their settings. The different options increase the likelihood of effects at different settlements. For example, the Grantham approach has increased potential to lead to effects on the historic environment resource in the vicinity of Grantham, and the market-led approach has increased potential to lead to effects on the historic environment resource in the vicinity of Stamford. Options 4b, 4a and 3b have increased potential to lead to impacts on the setting of the historic environment in Bourne and The Deeping compared to the other options.
- In-combination effects from multiple development areas may impact one or a

number of heritage assets. It is in this context that two or more developments in close proximity to one another may have cumulative effects on a heritage asset or number of heritage assets, including their settings. There is therefore potential for cumulative effects to take place through all of the options.

Local landscape and townscape:

- There are no National Parks or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in the vicinity of South Kesteven. As such the options do not have the potential to lead to effects on nationally designated landscapes.
- Due to the higher landscape sensitivities of the town, a Grantham focused approach under Option 1a, 2a, 2b and 2b has increased potential to result in significant negative effects on landscape character.
- Similarly, the market-led approach promotes a larger scale of development at Stamford and increases the potential to result in significant negative effects on landscape character due to high landscape sensitivities in the area.
- Conversely, given reduced landscape sensitivities in the vicinities of Bourne and The Deepings, development in these locations is less likely to result in significant negative effects on landscape character. This however depends on a range of factors, including the detailed location and scale of development proposed.
- However it is considered that significant negative effects on local landscape and townscape character could arise at any of the settlements if development is poorly located and designed. Alternatively, development in some locations, such as on brownfield sites, could improve local townscape character, resulting in positive effects.

Population and communities

- All of the options considered meet or exceed the existing housing need for the South Kesteven part of the Housing Market Area. Overall, through delivering a larger number of dwellings, Options 4b and 4a have most potential to deliver a broader range of housing types and tenures in the District.
- A focus of development in the four largest settlements in the District (Grantham, Bourne, The Deepings and Stamford) in all of the options will support accessibility to the wider choice of services, facilities, and amenities present in these locations. The delivery of the level of development proposed through all of the options will also enable these amenities and sustainable transport links to be enhanced.
- Depending on existing pressures on services and facilities, Options 4a and 4b have the potential to place increasing demands on existing amenities that will affect the quality of services used by existing residents. On the other hand, due to the requirements on developers to support infrastructure and services, for example the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 agreements/payments, there is potential for new development to support the provision of new and enhanced facilities and services, as well as transport links.
- In relation to the Larger Villages and Smaller Villages, all options promote the same level of growth and have the potential support the viability of local services in these settlements through additional housing provision. In this context it is considered that all of the options will potentially result in positive effects.

Health and wellbeing

- Development in the four largest towns (Grantham, Bourne, The Deepings and Stamford) will enhance accessibility through directing housing to the settlements with the broadest range of services and facilities (including health services and facilities); this will support accessibility to the wider range of amenities located in these settlements, with benefits for the health and wellbeing of residents. In this respect the levels of development proposed through all options in the four larger

settlements is considered likely to lead to positive effects in relation to this SA theme.

- Depending on current pressures on services and facilities, Options 4a and 4b could place increased pressures on existing services, potentially affecting the quality of services received by existing residents. However, due to the requirements on developers to support infrastructure and services, for example through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 agreements, payments may support the development of new and enhanced facilities and green infrastructure provision.

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- Employment
- Through delivering a larger number of dwellings in the District, Options 4a and 4b have the potential to deliver increased levels of housing provision across the district, with additional potential to support South Kesteven's economic vitality.
 - The Grantham approach taken forward through Options 1a, 2a, 3a and 4a (and in particular Option 4a) has the most potential to support the economic vitality of Grantham. Effects on the town's economy are considered to be long term effects, and have the potential to be significant positive effects if housing is delivered in partnership with the provision of appropriate sites for employment or improvements in training and space for entrepreneurial development.
 - It is considered that Option 4b, followed by Option 4a and then 3b have most potential to support the economic vitality of Bourne and the Deepings through promoting an additional level of housing in these locations.
 - The market-led approach promoted through 1b, 2b, 3b and 4b has the most potential to support the economic vitality of Stamford.
 - The proximity of Stamford, Bourne and The Deepings to Peterborough, as well as good transport links to the south and London, increases the need for housing development to be accompanied by employment allocations, improvements in educational and training opportunities and space for entrepreneurial development. This is given the potential for additional new development to contribute to these towns increasingly becoming commuter settlements for Peterborough and further afield.
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Reasonable alternatives for site allocations

2.11 To support the consideration of which sites to potentially allocate through the Local Plan, in 2016 a site assessment was undertaken through the SA process on the range of sites available for development in the District. Potential sites for development were identified through:

- the adopted Local Plan 2015;
- the adopted Core Strategy 2010;
- the Site Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document;
- a call for sites undertaken in 2015; and
- the Sites and Settlements Consultation undertaken during July – August 2016.

2.12 284 sites were reviewed and sites that did not meet the following criteria were removed:

- Located at a Local Service Centre (LSC)

- Having a developable area greater than 0.4 hectares, capable of delivering at least 10 dwellings
 - Attached to a settlement (to include sites adjacent to another potential allocation which is immediately adjacent to a settlement)
 - Planning permission has not already been granted
- 2.13 The second sieve looked at the constraints and opportunities on each site. A 'red/amber/green' rating was used to assess the site constraints and opportunities. Green scored 5, amber scored 2 and red scored -1. Where effects were unknown at this stage a neutral (0) score was given. The remaining sites, totalling 118, were assessed against the SA framework of objectives and indicators. To support this process, an appraisal of each of these sites was undertaken with the aim of informing the proposed allocation of sites through the Local Plan. The appraisal of the sites considered is presented in **Part 2 of the Technical Annex accompanying the full SA Report.**

The preferred spatial strategy option for the Local Plan

- 2.14 The following presents South Kesteven District Council's reasons for selecting the preferred spatial strategy approach for the Local Plan.
- 2.15 The overall strategy of the Local Plan is to deliver sustainable growth, including new housing and job creation, in order to facilitate growth in the local economy and support local residents. The focus for the majority of growth is in and around the four market towns, with Grantham being a particular focal point. Development should create strong, sustainable, cohesive and inclusive communities, making the most effective use of previously developed land (where possible) and enabling a larger number of people to access jobs, services and facilities locally. Development should provide the scale and mix of housing types that will meet the identified need for South Kesteven (as informed by the Peterborough Sub Regional Housing Market Assessments) and a range of new job opportunities in order to secure balanced communities (as informed by the Employment Land Study).'
- 2.16 Grantham is a sub-regional centre and to ensure that Grantham continues to function effectively in that role both for the District and wider region, the majority of growth both already consented and proposed in the Local Plan is focused on Grantham.
- 2.17 The four towns - Grantham, Stamford, Bourne and The Deepings offer services and facilities to their local communities as well as supporting the network of larger villages and smaller settlements located around them. In order to ensure the continued success of these Market Towns development proposals which support and enhance their role as service centres will be supported. The Local Plan will aim to protect existing retail and community facilities and to ensure that new housing and employment-generating development is sustainably located so as to complement the natural and built environments of the four Towns.
- 2.18 Beyond the four main towns – Grantham, Stamford, Bourne and The Deepings - the Larger Villages are considered to be the next most sustainable locations for growth within the District and therefore should positively contribute towards meeting the District's overall growth needs.
- 2.19 A review of services and facilities has determined that the following locations should be Larger Villages:
- Ancaster
 - Barkston
 - Barrowby
 - Great Gonerby
 - Harlaxton
 - Langtoft

- Baston
- Billingborough
- Caythorpe
- Colsterworth
- Corby Glen
- Long Bennington
- Morton
- South Witham
- Thurlby

2.20 Allocations are proposed in some of these settlements, and the appropriateness of these sites has been demonstrated through a robust appraisal process.

2.21 Small scale development will be permitted in 'Smaller Villages' to enable them to have moderate growth. Development in the Countryside will be strictly controlled.

3. What are the appraisal findings at this stage?

3.1 Part 2 of the SA Report answers the question – *what are the appraisal findings at this stage?* – by presenting an appraisal of the current version of the Local Plan. Appraisal findings are presented under the seven SA Theme headings, and summary findings are presented below. Where applicable, the appraisal narrative identifies the nature and significance of effects.

Biodiversity and geodiversity

3.2 The potential effects of Local Plan allocations on European designated nature conservation sites have been considered through the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening undertaken for the Local Plan. This has highlighted that the proposed spatial strategy is unlikely to have effects on these sites.

3.3 None of the residential allocations, or the strategic employment and employment allocations proposed through the Local Plan are located within SSSI Impact Risk Zones which are likely to lead to significant effects for the types of development being proposed.

3.4 The following sites are located within buffer zones for Local Wildlife Sites or Sites of Nature Conservation Importance and may require mitigation to reduce potential impacts:

- GR3-H1: Spitalgate Heath – Garden Village (Southern Quadrant), Grantham
- GR3-H3: Land adjacent to Rectory Farm (Phase 3 North West Quadrant), Grantham
- STM1-H1: Stamford North, Stamford
- LV-H1: Wilsford Lane, Ancaster
- LV-H2: Wilsford Lane, Ancaster
- LV-H5: Bourne Road, Colsterworth
- LV-H15: Part of Elm Farm Yard, Thurlby

3.5 Whilst no significant effects on biodiversity assets from the spatial strategy can be readily identified, there will be a need for effects on biodiversity linked to the allocations to be avoided

and mitigated. The Local Plan policy framework sets out provisions to protect biodiversity and geodiversity interests and promote open space and green infrastructure enhancements to support habitats and species.

- 3.6 A recommendation has been identified in the appraisal to provide additional impetus on the need to enhance ecological networks in the District, to support the development of a strategic approach to protecting and improving the natural environment based on local priorities and evidence. The SA also identifies that there is further scope for the Local Plan to support enhancements to the biodiversity value of key watercourses in the District, including as part of ecological networks.

Table 3.1: Likely significant effects: biodiversity and geodiversity

<i>Likely significant effect</i>	<i>Effect dimensions</i>
Improved ecological resilience	Direct, long-term, permanent and positive.
Increased habitat and greenspace through green infrastructure enhancements	Direct and indirect, long-term, permanent and positive.

Natural Resources

- 3.7 A significant proportion of the allocations proposed through the Local Plan are located on greenfield land, and many also have the potential to lead to the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land (Grade 1, 2 or 3a land). Development at a total of 17 of the proposed site allocations is likely to result in the permanent loss of Grade 1 or Grade 2 best and most versatile agricultural land. A further 18 sites are classified as Grade 3 agricultural land, however the sub-grade (3a or 3b) is unknown at this stage, and therefore the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land (Grade 3a) at these sites is uncertain. The significant loss of land classified as best and most versatile through the allocations in the Local Plan is considered likely to lead to significant negative effects on the District's soil resources.
- 3.8 The delivery of at least 624 dwellings a year and new employment land in the District is considered to have the potential to affect traffic flows which impact on air quality. The Local Plan combats these effects by directing the majority of development towards the larger settlements of Grantham, Stamford, Bourne and The Deepings. This has the potential to encourage the use of lower carbon modes of transport, including walking and cycling and public transport through directing development to the settlements with the broadest range of services and facilities.
- 3.9 One housing allocation (GR3-H1: Spitalgate Heath – Garden Village (Southern Quadrant)) is located within 1km of the District's sole Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), and mitigation may be required to reduce the extent of the potential effects of development at this site on air quality.
- 3.10 In relation to water resources, all of the proposed site allocations have been established as requiring or potentially requiring additional wastewater treatment capacity and new discharge permits to meet water quality targets.
- 3.11 The Local Plan policy framework sets out provisions to protect and where possible enhance natural resources, including; a strong presumption towards development on previously developed land; the efficient use of land and resources (including energy and resource efficiency in new development); encouraging and facilitating sustainable transport use; the appropriate siting of new development (particularly in reducing the need to travel); enhancements to green infrastructure; and the protection of environmental quality. These

provisions seek to minimise the potential impacts of new development on natural resources and maximise the potential for positive effects.

Table 3.2: Likely significant effects: natural resources

<i>Likely significant effect</i>	<i>Effect dimensions</i>
Loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land in the district.	Direct, long-term, permanent and negative.
Efficient use of land through an intensification of uses and a focus on the use of previously developed land for non-allocated land.	Direct, long-term, permanent and positive.
Limitation of the effects of housing and employment growth on existing air quality issues in the district.	Direct, long-term, permanent and positive.
Limitation of the effects of housing and employment growth on noise quality in the district.	Direct, long-term, permanent and positive.
Limitation of water use from new development in the district.	Direct, long-term, permanent and positive.

Climate Change

- 3.12 Overall the delivery of growth in the District is considered to have the potential to increase the built footprint of South Kesteven, with associated increases in greenhouse gas emissions (of which road transport is an increasingly significant contributor). The Local Plan seeks to limit potential effects by directing the majority of development towards the larger settlements of Grantham, Bourne, Stamford and The Deepings. This has the potential to encourage the use of lower carbon modes of transport, including walking and cycling and public transport through directing development to the settlements with the broadest range of services and facilities. This will support a reduction of per capita emissions of greenhouse gas emissions.
- 3.13 In terms of climate change mitigation, the sustainability performance of the Local Plan's spatial strategy depends on elements such as the integration of energy efficient design within new development, the provision of renewable energy and policies encouraging the use of sustainable modes of transport. The Local Plan policy framework sets out provisions to maximise the potential for energy efficient design and the provision of renewable energy. It also seeks to locate the majority of development in the larger settlements to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport as well as limit the need to travel.
- 3.14 None of the proposed allocations for housing or employment development are located within a Flood Risk Zone, and the Local Plan recognises the potential for green infrastructure to manage environmental risks associated with climate change. Alongside, Local Plan Policy EN5 (Reducing the risk of Flooding) and the provisions within the NPPF, it is considered unlikely that the Local Plan will lead to any significant effects with regards to fluvial and surface water flood risk.

Table 3.3: Likely significant effects: climate change

<i>Likely significant effect</i>	<i>Effect dimensions</i>
Limitation in greenhouse gas emissions resulting from growth through reducing need to travel and modal shift.	Direct and indirect, long-term, permanent and positive.
Limitation in greenhouse gas emissions resulting from growth through the development of low carbon and renewable energy installations and the promotion of energy efficient development.	Direct and indirect, long-term, permanent and positive.
Enhancements to the resilience of the district to the effects of climate change.	Direct and indirect, short, medium and long-term, permanent and positive.

Historic Environment, Landscape and Townscape

- 3.15 The appraisal recognises that the delivery of housing and employment growth in the District has the potential to both negatively and positively affect the historic environment and landscape character. The potential effects are largely dependent on high quality design and layout that is sensitive and responsive to its surroundings.
- 3.16 The Low Road site in Barrowby (LV-H3) is proposed within an area of high landscape sensitivity associated with the Harlaxton and Denton Bowl Landscape Area, and a further 12 sites are located within areas assessed as having medium-high landscape sensitivity. Also, two site allocations (GR3-H4 & LV-H12) are located within or adjacent to conservation areas, and the Prince William of Gloucester Barracks site in Grantham contains a Listed Building.
- 3.17 The Local Plan sets out provisions to minimise the impacts of new development on landscape character and the historic environment, and maximise the potential for new development to complement landscape, townscape and historic features and settings, including; protections for the character of towns, villages and landscapes; protections for conserving and enhancing heritage assets and their settings; site specific policy mitigation; dedicated policies for key historic environment assets/settings; and the promotion of high quality design (including public realm improvements).

Table 3.4: Likely significant effects: historic environment, landscape and townscape

<i>Likely significant effect</i>	<i>Effect dimensions</i>
Enhanced townscape character, public realm and local distinctiveness.	Direct and indirect, long-term, permanent and positive
Protection and enhancement of heritage assets, including repair and reuse where appropriate.	Direct, long-term, permanent and positive.
Revitalisation of features and areas of historic environment value in the district.	Direct and indirect, long-term, permanent and positive.

Population and Communities

- 3.18 Good accessibility to housing, services and facilities is central to the quality of life of residents, for sustaining vital communities and improving health and wellbeing. The SA recognises that accessibility to services and facilities is limited in many part of the District due to the dispersed nature of settlements and limited public transport provision. In this context, the settlement hierarchy for the District set out by the Local Plan will help to enhance accessibility by sustainable transport modes and reduce the need to travel by focusing increased levels of growth in the market towns of the District, and ultimately directing development to areas with an appropriate range of services and facilities. It is considered that the development strategy provides an appropriate balance between supporting accessibility in the larger settlements of the District whilst also supporting social inclusion in smaller settlements.
- 3.19 This is supported by the policy framework which seeks to: protect and enhance the vitality and viability of town centres; retain and enhance community services and facilities; and ensure that development delivers the necessary infrastructure provisions for local communities.
- 3.20 The Local Plan sets out provisions to ensure that development meets the range of needs of local communities, including provisions for; affordable housing; an appropriate mix of housing types and tenures; high quality design; and specialist housing.

Table 3.5: Likely significant effects: population and communities

<i>Likely significant effect</i>	<i>Effect dimensions</i>
Housing provision takes full account of housing need.	Direct, long-term, permanent and positive overall.
Increased delivery of affordable housing.	Direct, long-term, permanent and positive overall.
Enhanced provision of community infrastructure.	Direct, long-term, permanent and positive.
Improved access to services and facilities.	Direct, long-term, permanent and positive overall.
Increased use of sustainable transport modes, including public transport and walking and cycling.	Direct, long-term, permanent and positive overall.
Maintain and enhance the vitality of communities by locating housing where it sustains balanced communities.	Direct, long-term, permanent and positive overall.
Delivery of high quality pitches for Gypsies and Travellers and plots for Travelling Showpeople	Direct, long-term, permanent and positive overall.

Health and wellbeing

- 3.21 The delivery of new, high quality housing, of a broad range of types and tenures, to meet the needs of residents will support their long term health and wellbeing. This includes provisions for; affordable housing; flexible use; self and custom build; and pitches for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.
- 3.22 A key influence on health and wellbeing is good accessibility to services and facilities. In this context, the spatial strategy and defined settlement hierarchy of the Local Plan will reduce the need to travel and enhance accessibility for residents by focusing housing and employment provision in the settlements with the broader range of services, facilities and amenities. This will support the health and wellbeing of residents. Delivering development in these settlements will also support more sustainable modes of transport and road safety, including pedestrian and cycle access, further supporting healthy lifestyles.
- 3.23 The Local Plan seeks to protect and enhance the District's built and natural environment, ensuring accessible space – including natural green space – for recreation and relaxation, as well as air and water quality benefits, to support healthy and active lifestyles.

Table 3.6: Likely significant effects: health and wellbeing

<i>Likely significant effect</i>	<i>Effect dimensions</i>
Improvements in mental and physical health and wellbeing through enhancements to the quality of the built environment and public realm	Indirect, long-term, permanent and positive.
Improvements to health and wellbeing through prioritising transport modes other than cars and improving accessibility to services and facilities.	Indirect, long-term, permanent and positive.
Enhancements of active travel opportunities.	Direct, long-term, permanent and positive overall.
Enhancements to strategic and local green infrastructure networks, promoting leisure and recreational opportunities and active lifestyles.	Indirect, long-term, permanent and positive.
Support for health and wellbeing through the delivery of high quality, energy efficient housing which meets local needs.	Direct, long-term, permanent and positive overall.
Enhanced provision of community infrastructure.	Direct, long-term, permanent and positive overall.

Employment

- 3.24 The preferred spatial strategy directs an increased level of housing provision to Grantham, which is considered likely to support ongoing enhancements to the economic vitality of the town, recognising the need to support the town centre's viability and employment opportunities. Similarly, the delivery of new housing and employment provision in the market towns of Stamford, Bourne and The Deepings, as well as new housing provision in the Larger Villages will support their economic vitality and employment opportunities. In this context, the settlement hierarchy and town centre policies will support the distinct economic functions and roles of each of the settlements.
- 3.25 By focusing housing and employment development in the larger settlements, the Local Plan further supports increased accessibility by sustainable transport modes, increased access to services and facilities, and a reduced need to travel, with the potential for long term positive effects.
- 3.26 Strategic and non-strategic scale employment sites proposed through the Local Plan, alongside protections for existing employment sites, will directly support the retention and growth of local economies with the potential for long term positive effects.
- 3.27 Further policies supporting the development of broadband and communications infrastructure, the rural economy and the visitor economy are considered likely to lead to long term positive effects for this SA theme.

Table 3.7: Likely significant effects: employment

<i>Likely significant effect</i>	<i>Effect dimensions</i>
Facilitating the growth and expansion of existing businesses and the encouragement of new businesses to locate in the district through appropriate employment land provision.	Direct, long-term, permanent and positive.
Promoting the economic vitality of Grantham, Stamford, Bourne and The Deepings.	Direct, indirect, long-term, permanent and positive.
Promoting the vitality and viability of the district's Larger Villages.	Direct, indirect, long-term, permanent and positive.
Supporting the district's rural economy.	Direct, indirect, long-term, permanent and positive.
Promotion of employment opportunities in the district.	Direct, indirect, long-term, permanent and positive.
Diversification of the district's economy.	Direct, indirect, long-term, permanent and positive.

4. Next steps

- 4.1 Part 3 of the SA Report answers the question – *What happens next?*
- 4.1 This SA Report / NTS accompanies the current 'Regulation 19' consultation on the South Kesteven District Council Local Plan 2011-2036.
- 4.2 Once the period for representation on the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan documents / SA Report concludes, the main issues raised will be identified and summarised by South Kesteven District Council, who will then consider whether, in light of representations received, the plan can still be deemed 'sound'. If this is the case, the Local Plan will be submitted for Examination, alongside a statement setting out the main issues raised during the consultation. The Council will also submit the SA Report.
- 4.3 At Examination, the Inspector will consider representations (alongside the SA Report) before then either reporting back on the Local Plan's soundness or identifying the need for modifications. If the Inspector identifies the need for modifications to the Plan these will be prepared (and undergo SA) and then be subject to consultation (with an SA Report Addendum published alongside).
- 4.4 Once found to be 'sound', the Local Plan will be formally adopted by South Kesteven District Council. At the time of Adoption, an SA 'Statement' must be published that sets out (amongst other elements) *'the measures decided concerning monitoring'*.

