

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) for the South Kesteven Local Plan Review

Interim SA Report to accompany Regulation 18
consultation on the Draft Local Plan

South Kesteven District Council

February 2024

Quality information

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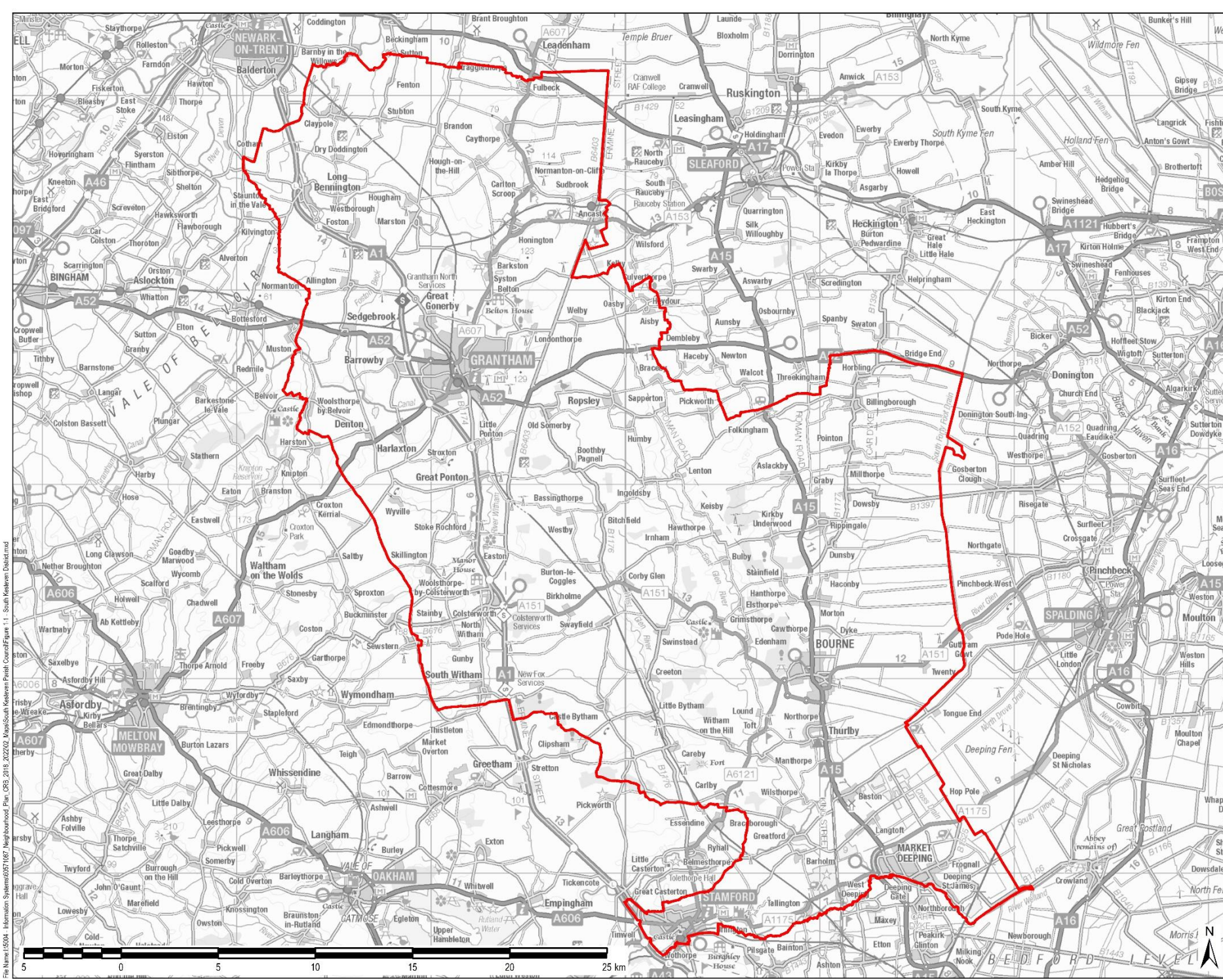
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 South Kesteven District

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent Sustainability Appraisal (SA) in support of South Kesteven District Council's update of its adopted Local Plan.
- 1.2 This Interim SA Report accompanies the *Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan (2021-2041)* document¹ for consultation.

The South Kesteven Local Plan Review

- 1.3 The South Kesteven Local Plan (2011-2036) was adopted in January 2020.
- 1.4 The Planning Inspector's final report on the adopted Local Plan confirmed that the Council should commit to undertaking an early review of the Local Plan from April 2020. The Inspector's report highlights the rationale for completing an early review, including factors such as:
 - Emerging national policy considerations and legislation.
 - An updated assessment of employment land requirements; and
 - Addressing the needs of gypsies and travellers.
- 1.5 Alongside, there is a need for Local Plans to be periodically reviewed to keep them up to date. Housing requirements, for example, must now be reviewed at least once every five years. Whilst the adopted Local Plan is delivering on its adopted requirements and current needs, the Council is taking the opportunity to consider development needs for the District beyond the current Local Plan period, taking into consideration the changes to national planning guidance.
- 1.6 South Kesteven District Council has therefore taken the decision to revisit the relevant policies of the adopted Local Plan. The intention is not to deliver a full-scale update – effectively a replacement Local Plan – but instead undertake a targeted update focussing on specific issues. It will also consider development needs up to 2041 and options for how these may be delivered.
- 1.7 Key information relating to the Local Plan Review is presented in **Table 1.1**.

¹ South Kesteven District Council (February 2024) South Kesteven Local Plan Review: Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan Consultation

Table 1.1: Key facts relating to the South Kesteven Local Plan Review

Name of Responsible Authority	South Kesteven District Council
Title of Plan	South Kesteven Local Plan Review (LPR)
Subject	Development plan
Purpose	<p>The LPR will guide future development and land use within South Kesteven District over the period up to 2041.</p> <p>Updating the South Kesteven Local Plan adopted in January 2020, the LPR will, alongside Neighbourhood Plans, comprise the development plan for the District and will be the primary basis against which planning applications are assessed.</p>
Timescale	To 2041
Area covered by the plan	<p>South Kesteven District</p> <p>(Figure 1.1)</p>
Summary of content	<p>The LPR will set out the vision, strategy, and policies to manage growth and development in South Kesteven in the period to 2041.</p> <p>It will indicate the broad locations in the District for future housing, employment, retail, leisure, transport, community services and other types of development.</p>
Plan contact point	<p>Jake Horton, Senior Planning Policy Officer, South Kesteven District Council</p> <p>Email address: J.Horton@southkesteven.gov.uk</p>

Current stage of plan making

- 1.8 At the current stage of plan making, South Kesteven District Council are consulting on a 'Draft Local Plan'. The document is an interim stage in developing the Local Plan Review and has been prepared under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (England) Regulations 2012).
- 1.9 The *Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan consultation* document contains a summary of:
- A series of planning policies to guide development in the District to 2041; and
 - Potential locations for housing and employment development that may be taken forward through the Local Plan Review in the period to 2041.
- 1.10 The *Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan consultation* follows the release of an initial 'Issues and Options' document for the Local Plan Review in October 2020. The aim of the Issues and Options consultation was to gain stakeholders' views on the approach Local Plan Review policies can take on various key planning issues for the District, including alternative development strategies for the District.

1.11 The current consultation precedes the release of the pre-submission version of the Local Plan for Regulation 19 consultation later in 2024. Drawing on consultation responses received at the current stage of plan-making and evidence base studies undertaken to inform the Local Plan Review, this document will develop further the proposed updates for the Local Plan, including relating to the development strategy and allocations to 2041.

2. Sustainability Appraisal for the South Kesteven Local Plan Review

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) explained

- 2.1 SA considers and communicates the likely significant effects of an emerging plan, and the reasonable alternatives considered during the plan making process, in terms of key sustainability issues. The aim of SA is to inform and influence the plan-making process with a view to avoiding or mitigating negative effects and maximising positive effects. Through this approach, the SA seeks to maximise the Local Plan Review's contribution to sustainable development.
- 2.2 SA is undertaken to address the procedures prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations). It also widens the scope of the assessment from focusing on environmental issues to further consider social and economic issues. SA is a legal requirement for Local Plans.
- 2.3 The National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) states that the role of SA is *"...to promote sustainable development by assessing the extent to which the emerging plan, when judged against reasonable alternatives, will help to achieve relevant environmental, economic and social objectives."*²
- 2.4 Two key procedural requirements of the SEA Regulations are that:
 - When deciding on 'the scope and level of detail of the information' which must be included in the SA Report there is a consultation with nationally designated authorities concerned with environmental issues; and
 - A report (the 'SA Report') is published for consultation alongside the Draft Plan that presents an assessment of the Draft Plan (i.e. discusses 'likely significant effects' that would result from plan implementation) and reasonable alternatives.

This Interim SA Report

- 2.5 At the current stage of plan making, South Kesteven District Council are consulting on a 'Draft Local Plan'. The Draft Local Plan outlines potential locations for housing and employment development that may be taken forward through the Local Plan Review, alongside a series of planning policies to guide development in the District to 2041.
- 2.6 This Interim SA Report has been produced with the intention of informing the current stage of preparation for the Local Plan Review. Specifically, this report presents an appraisal of:
 - The environmental constraints present in the potential locations for growth around the main settlements of the District.
 - The environmental constraints associated with available site options in the District for a potential allocation within the Local Plan Review.

² National Planning Practice Guidance. Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 11-001-20190722

- Potential site options for the Local Plan Review; and
 - The proposed updates to the Local Plan Review policies.
- 2.7 Subsequent stages of the SA process will, if appropriate, consider more detailed development strategy options for the Local Plan Review, including through an assessment of alternatives associated with housing numbers, employment land, and spatial strategies. The findings of these assessments will be presented in an SA Report accompanying Regulation 19 consultation on the pre-submission version of the Local Plan Review.
- 2.8 The next steps for the Local Plan Review’s development and accompanying SA process are discussed in more detail in **Chapter 8**.

What is the scope of the SA?

SA Scoping Report

- 2.9 The SEA Regulations require that: *“When deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the report, the responsible authority shall consult the consultation bodies”*. In England, the consultation bodies are the Environment Agency, Historic England, and Natural England.³ These authorities were consulted on the scope of the Local Plan Review SA in August and September 2020.
- 2.10 The baseline information (including baseline data and context review) initially included in the Scoping Report has been updated in the period since and provides the basis for the SA process. The responses (along with comments on how these have been considered and addressed through the SA process) will be presented in the SA Report which will accompany the pre-submission draft Local Plan at Regulation 19 consultation later in 2024.

SA Framework

- 2.11 Drawing on the review of the sustainability context and baseline, the SA Scoping Report identified a range of sustainability issues that should be a particular focus of SA, ensuring it remains targeted on the most important issues. These issues were then translated into an SA ‘framework’ of objectives and appraisal questions.
- 2.12 The SA Framework provides a way in which the sustainability effects of the Local Plan Review and alternatives can be identified and subsequently analysed based on a structured and consistent approach.
- 2.13 The SA Framework and the appraisal findings in this Interim SA Report have been presented under nine SA themes, reflecting the range of information being considered through the SA process. These are:
- Biodiversity and Geodiversity.
 - Landscape.
 - Historic Environment.

³ In line with Article 6(3) of the SEA Directive, these consultation bodies were selected because *“by reason of their specific environmental responsibilities, [they] are likely to be concerned by the environmental effects of implementing plans and programme”*.

- Air, Land, Water and Soils Resources.
- Climate Change.
- Population and Community.
- Health and Wellbeing.
- Transport; and
- Economic Vitality

2.14 The SA Framework is presented in **Table 2.1** below.

Table 2.1: SA Framework for the SA of the South Kesteven Local Plan Review

SA Objective	Appraisal questions... will the option/proposal help to...
SA theme: Biodiversity and Geodiversity	
1) Support the integrity of internationally, European, nationally, and locally designated sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect the integrity of the internationally, European, and nationally designated sites within and within proximity to South Kesteven? • Manage pressures on locally designated sites for biodiversity and geodiversity in South Kesteven?
2) Protect and enhance habitats and species in South Kesteven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and enhance priority habitats, and the habitat of priority species? • Protect key species during the construction and operational phases of new development areas? • Protect and enhance ecological networks? • Achieve a net gain in biodiversity? • Increase the resilience of South Kesteven's biodiversity to the potential effects of climate change?
3) Enhance understanding of biodiversity and geodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of biodiversity and geodiversity? • Encourage opportunities for engagement with South Kesteven's biodiversity and geodiversity resource?
SA theme: Landscape	
4) Protect and enhance the character and quality of South Kesteven's landscapes, townscapes and villagescapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the distinctive qualities of the NCAs and LCAs within and surrounding South Kesteven? • Protect and enhance key landscape, townscape and villagescape features which contribute to local distinctiveness? • Protect locally important viewpoints contributing to sense of place and visual amenity? • Improve understanding of South Kesteven's distinctive landscape, townscape and villagescape resources?
5) Contribute to tranquillity and the quality of dark skies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that new infrastructure provision does not adversely impact on the quality of South Kesteven's dark skies? • Minimise the impact on and seek to improve areas of tranquillity?
SA theme: Historic Environment	

SA Objective	Appraisal questions... will the option/proposal help to...
6) Conserve and enhance South Kesteven's historic environment, including designated and non-designated heritage assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve and enhance the significance of buildings and structures of architectural or historic interest, both designated and non-designated, and their setting? • Conserve and enhance the special interest, character and appearance of conservation areas and their settings? • Conserve and enhance the special interest, character and appearance of registered parks and gardens, and their settings? • Protect and where possible, enhance the wider historic environment, including historic landscapes?
7) Conserve and enhance South Kesteven's archaeological resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserve and enhance archaeological resource, including features listed on the Lincolnshire HER?
8) Promote opportunities for enhancing the understanding of South Kesteven's distinct historic environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the historic evolution and character of the environment? • Ensure that, where possible, development contributes to improved public understanding of assets and their settings?
SA theme: Air, Land, Soil and Water Resources	
Deliver improvements in air quality in South Kesteven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce emissions of pollutants from transport? • Improve air quality within the Grantham Town Centre AQMA in line with the measures identified in the AQAP? • Promote the use of low emission vehicles? • Promote enhancements in sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport? • Promote enhancements to green infrastructure networks to facilitate increased absorption and dissipation of nitrogen dioxide and other pollutants?
Ensure the efficient and effective use of land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid the sterilisation of the best and most versatile agricultural land (i.e. in the District, Grade 2 and 3a land)? • Protect the integrity of mineral safeguarding areas? • Support the remediation of contaminated land?
Promote sustainable waste management solutions that encourage the reduction, re-use, and recycling of waste	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage recycling of materials and minimise consumption of resources during construction, operation, and maintenance of new infrastructure?
Manage South Kesteven's water resources in a sustainable manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support improvements to water quality consistent with the aims of the Water Framework Directive? • Help to minimise diffuse surface water pollution? • Protect surface water and groundwater resources? • Minimise water consumption?

SA theme: Climate Change

SA Objective	Appraisal questions... will the option/proposal help to...
Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within South Kesteven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the use of sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport? • Increase the number of new developments meeting or exceeding sustainable design criteria? • Generate energy from low or zero carbon sources? • Reduce energy consumption from non-renewable resources?
Support South Kesteven's resilience to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that inappropriate development does not take place in areas at higher risk of flooding, taking into account the likely future effects of climate change? • Improve and extend green infrastructure networks to support adaptation to the potential effects of climate change? • Sustainably manage water run-off, reducing surface water runoff? • Ensure the potential risks associated with climate change are considered through new development areas?
SA theme: Population and Community	
Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the timely delivery of an appropriate mix of housing types and tenures? • Ensure delivery of high-quality, affordable and specialist housing that meets the needs of South Kesteven's residents? • Provide quality and flexible homes that meet people's needs? • Promote the use of sustainable building techniques, including use of sustainable building materials in construction? • Provide housing in sustainable locations that allow easy access to a range of local services and facilities?
Delivery of infrastructure to meet the foreseeable needs of the varied communities of South Kesteven	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet the needs of a growing population? • Meet the needs of those living in rural areas? • Address the needs of all age groups? • Maintain or enhance the quality of life of residents?
Support the quality of neighbourhoods as a place to live	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help remove barriers to activities and reduce social isolation? • Enhance community infrastructure? • Support the energy efficiency of new and existing development, including in reducing fuel poverty?

SA theme: Health and Wellbeing

Improve the health and well-being of South Kesteven's residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the impacts of pollution on health? • Support the health objectives as stated within the Public Health Profile, JSNA and JHWS? • Reduce health inequalities? • Enhance the provision of, and access to, open space and green infrastructure in the District, in accordance with national standards? • Improve access to the countryside and coast for recreation? • Encourage healthy lifestyles and active travel modes, including walking and cycling?
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SA Objective

Appraisal questions... will the option/proposal help to...

SA theme: Transport

- | | |
|---|--|
| Promote sustainable transport use and encourage accessibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduce the number of journeys made and the need to travel?• Improve access to and quality of sustainable transport modes for all communities to encourage modal shift?• Improve accessibility to services, facilities and amenities? |
|---|--|
-

SA theme: Economic Vitality

- | | |
|--|--|
| Support sustainable economic development in South Kesteven | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support traditional and emerging sectors of South Kesteven's economy?• Improve internet connectivity to support the digital economy and facilitate flexible working practices?• Enhance the vitality of the District's town and local centres?• Support rural diversification?• Improve accessibility to employment opportunities?• Enhance training and educational opportunities? |
|--|--|
-

3. Plan making and SA process to date

- 3.1 The Local Plan Review has been in development since early 2020 and has been informed by the SA process.
- 3.2 A key element of the SA process is the appraisal of ‘reasonable alternatives’ for the Local Plan Review. This is a central requirement of the SEA Regulations.
- 3.3 The SEA Regulations are not prescriptive as to what constitutes a reasonable alternative, stating only that the SA Report should present an appraisal of the ‘*plan and reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan*’.
- 3.4 A main focus of reasonable alternatives development and assessment to date has been with respect to the policy approaches that can be taken by the Local Plan Review and the location of development to be taken forward through the Local Plan.
- 3.5 The following chapters therefore describe how the SA process to date has informed the Local Plan Review, including in terms of the development of its planning policies, and potential locations for additional development that may be taken forward through the Local Plan Review in the period to 2041.
- 3.6 Specifically, they present an overview of the following:
- **SA work to support Issues and Options:** An appraisal of a series of high-level approaches and alternatives for the Local Plan Review to inform policy development.
 - **Points of the Compass Appraisal:** An analysis of the environmental constraints present in the vicinity of the 20 main settlements in the District, specifically: the Sub-Regional Centre (Grantham); Market Towns (Bourne, Stamford, and The Deepings); and the 16 Larger Villages.
 - **Assessment of potential site options:** an assessment of the available sites in the District. This is with a view to informing the choice of sites to be allocated for housing and employment through the Local Plan Review and for providing the basis for subsequent ‘reasonable alternatives’ work to be undertaken through the SA process.
- 3.7 An overview of further reasonable alternatives work that will be undertaken prior to Regulation 19 consultation on the pre-submission version of the Local Plan Review is also provided in **Chapter 8**.

4. Issues and Options (October 2020)

Regulation 18 Issues and Options and Call for Sites Consultation

- 4.1 In October 2020, consultation was undertaken on an Issues and Options document for the Local Plan Review.⁴ The Issues and Options document was the key output of the initial stage in developing the updates and was prepared under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (England) Regulations 2012.
- 4.2 The aim of the public consultation was to gain stakeholders' views on a range of planning issues. Specifically, the consultation was a statement of intention as to what planning policies may need to be updated, determining the scope and content of the Local Plan Review.
- 4.3 Additionally, this stage in the Local Plan Review process sought to identify what land is available for potential development within the District. Submissions of potential sites were made between October 2020 and September 2022.

SA work to accompany Issues and Options

- 4.4 To support the Issues and Options stage, an Interim SA Report⁵ was produced voluntarily with the intention of informing this stage of preparation of the Local Plan Review. Specifically, the Interim SA Report presented an appraisal of a series of high-level approaches and alternatives (hereafter referred to as "options") which were evaluated as part of plan development. This was for the benefit of plan-makers tasked with developing the updates for the Local Plan Review and for consideration alongside the representations received during the consultation.
- 4.5 The sets of options considered through the SA were as follows:
 - Options for growth in Grantham.
 - Options for growth in Stamford, Bourne and The Deepings.
 - Options for growth in the Larger Villages.
 - Options for growth in the Smaller Villages.
 - Options for a new garden community.
 - Options for biodiversity net gain.
 - Options for residential caravan and park home accommodation; and
 - Options for parking standards.
- 4.6 Each option was considered against the SA Framework of objectives and assessment questions developed at scoping (**Table 2.1**).

⁴ South Kesteven District Council (October 2020): South Kesteven Local Plan Review - Regulation 18 Issues and Options Report

⁵ AECOM (October 2020) Sustainability Appraisal (SA) for the South Kesteven Local Plan Review: Interim SA Report to accompany Issues and Options consultation

4.7 Presenting the appraisal of these options, the following information was presented in the Interim SA Report:

- A description of the options appraised.
- An overview of the likely significant positive and negative effects of each option; and
- A ranking of the sustainability performance of each option relating to each SA Theme to highlight their relative sustainability merits.

4.8 The Interim SA Report which accompanied the Issues and Options Consultation can be accessed at the following location:

<https://www.southkesteven.gov.uk/planning-building-control/planning-policy-local-plans/local-plan-review>

5. Points of the Compass Appraisal

- 5.1 As discussed in **Chapter 1**, whilst the adopted Local Plan is delivering on its adopted housing requirements and current needs, South Kesteven District Council is taking the opportunity to consider development needs and development strategy options beyond the current Local Plan period.
- 5.2 In response to this, South Kesteven District Council is considering development needs up to 2041 and options for how these may be delivered.
- 5.3 To support this process, a ‘points of the compass’ analysis of the 20 main settlements in South Kesteven District has been undertaken. This is with a view to evaluating the relative sustainability merits of promoting development at various broad locations in the vicinity of each of the settlements and to facilitate the consideration of potential locations for longer term site allocations.
- 5.4 A number of broad areas around main 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 is to aid the consideration of appropriate locations for growth to be taken forward through the Local Plan Review.
- 5.5 Loosely reflecting the various ‘points of the compass’, these broad areas consider potential locations for development in the vicinity of the following settlements:

Sub-Regional Centre

- Grantham.

Market Towns

- Bourne
- Stamford; and
- The Deepings

Larger Villages

- Ancaster
- Barkston
- Barrowby
- Baston
- Billingborough
- Caythorpe and Frieston
- Claypole
- Colsterworth
- Corby Glen

- Great Gonerby
- Harlaxton
- Langtoft
- Long Bennington
- Morton
- South Witham; and
- Thurlby and Northorpe.

5.6 The analysis evaluates the key environmental constraints present in each of the broad areas proposed, including related to:

- Biodiversity
- Flood Risk
- The Historic Environment
- Landscape Quality
- Water
- Agricultural Land Quality.

5.7 The Points of the Compass Appraisal is presented in the **Technical Annex** accompanying this SA Report.

6. Assessment of potential site options

Overview of the development strategy for the Local Plan Review

- 6.1 The overall development strategy for the Local Plan Review has been carried forward from the adopted Local Plan.
- 6.2 Specifically, the focus for the Local Plan Review 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 majority of growth during the emerging plan period (to 2041) is in and around the Sub-Regional Centre (Grantham), the three Market Towns (Bourne, Stamford, and The Deepings), and the 16 Larger Villages.
- 6.3 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 and a range of new job opportunities in order to secure balanced communities.
- 6.4 The Sub-Regional Centre and Market Towns 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 support the vitality of these locations, development proposals which support and enhance their role as service centres will be supported. The Local Plan Review will aim to protect existing retail and community facilities and ensure that new housing and employment development is sustainably located so as to complement the natural and built environments of these locations.
- 6.5 Outside of the Sub-Regional Centre and Market Towns, 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.
- 6.6 Small scale development will be permitted in Smaller Villages to enable them to have moderate growth. Development in the Countryside will be strictly controlled.

GIS Site Assessment process

- 6.7 There is a need for Local Plans to be periodically reviewed to keep them up to date. Housing requirements, for example, must now be reviewed at least once every five years. Whilst the adopted Local Plan is delivering on its adopted requirements and current needs, the Council is taking the opportunity to consider development needs and development strategy options for the District beyond the current Local Plan period (2036) to 2041, taking into consideration the changes to national planning guidance.
- 6.8 During the Issues and Options stage of plan making for the Local Plan Review, the Council sought to identify what land is available for potential development within the District. Developers, landowners, town and parish councils, and other interested parties were invited to submit sites for inclusion in the Local

Plan Review through a ‘call for sites’ process. Submissions of potential sites were made between October 2020 and September 2022.

- 6.9 To support the consideration of sites identified through the ‘call for sites’ process, a separate assessment of each of the sites available within South Kesteven has been undertaken through the SA process, with the aim of informing the proposed allocation of sites through the Local Plan Review. A total of 289 sites have been assessed.
- 6.10 The full site assessment findings are presented in the **Technical Annex** accompanying this SA Report.

Appraisal of shortlisted site options

Introduction

- 6.11 With respect to housing numbers, the minimum Local Plan Review requirement for South Kesteven is 14,020 dwellings across the plan period (2021-2041), equating to 701 dwellings per annum. Whilst the housing requirement is based on the Standard Method Calculation, the Local Plan Review trajectory (which indicates broadly when and how much housing the Council expects to be delivered) contains a “buffer” of around 21% above the minimum requirement of 14,020 new homes by 2041. On this basis, the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan suggests that a residual requirement of 2,901 new homes is required during the plan period.
- 6.12 Based on the context, vision and objectives of the Local Plan Review, Policy SP1 within the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan sets out the overarching development strategy for the District (as discussed in paragraph 6.1 and 6.2 within this chapter of the Interim SA Report). The Settlement Hierarchy is detailed in Policy SP2. Taken together, they indicate how the total number of new homes that are to be built will be distributed across the District to achieve a sustainable pattern of development.
- 6.13 With respect to employment land, the National Planning Policy Framework (2023) outlines that there is a need for local planning authorities to bring forward serviced land for employment use, in suitable locations, in a timeframe that meets market demands as well as the future growth requirements. The Council has identified key sites where it will particularly focus attention and work with landowners and developers to facilitate servicing the land in order to make them available for development.
- 6.14 The Local Plan Review allocates circa 338(ha) of new employment sites across the District. Whilst this is significantly higher than the requirement identified in the Employment Land Study (2023), the sites offer a suitable choice to the market through the identification of new land for a range of employment uses. This will ensure the further economic growth scenarios can be met by attracting substantial inward investment and providing a wide range of jobs in various sectors and industries to meet the allocated housing and population growth across South Kesteven.

Approach to the appraisal

- 6.15 With a view to meeting housing and employment needs for the District during the plan period (to 2041), a shortlist of potential site allocations for the Local

Plan Review have been identified (as presented in Policy H1 and Policy E2 within the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan). The shortlist of potential site allocations has been informed by the overall development strategy for the District and the findings of the GIS Site Assessment process.

- 6.16 The SA process has considered the constraints and opportunities associated with the potential site allocations, with the appraisal findings presented through the nine SA themes. This is discussed below. Detailed spatial strategy options (i.e., growth scenarios) will be explored in the SA Report accompanying the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan review.

Biodiversity and Geodiversity

- 6.17 Potential effects of the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan potential site allocations on European designated nature conservation sites have been considered through the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) undertaken for the Local Plan.⁶ The HRA assessed: recreational pressure; air quality; water quantity, level and flow; and water quality at two Special Protection Areas and three Special Areas for Conservation. The HRA concluded that the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan would not result in significant effects to the integrity of European designated sites.
- 6.18 Beginning with the potential site allocation's proximity to designated sites, none of them are within 1 km of a European designated site for biodiversity conservation.
- 6.19 Turning to nationally designated sites for biodiversity conservation, three potential residential site allocations (SKPR-56; SKPR-61; SKPR-71) are between 500 m and 1 km of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Development at these sites may fall within the SSSI's Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) thresholds for the scale of development which could come forward at these locations, and therefore may require further consultation with Natural England as planning progresses.
- 6.20 In terms of locally designated ecological and geological sites, none of the potential residential or employment site allocations overlap with a Local Wildlife Site (LWS), Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS) or Local Geology Site (LGS).
- 6.21 Three residential sites (SKPR-57; SKPR-74; SKPR-242) overlap with an area of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority habitat or other designated habitat. Development at any of these sites should seek to retain and enhance habitats on site and may require mitigation (such as buffer zones) to minimise the potential for negative effects.
- 6.22 For the purposes of the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan, Biodiversity Opportunity Areas refer to a designated region within South Kesteven that is identified through biodiversity opportunity mapping and is important for creating ecological networks across the district. These areas have been identified as important sites for promoting nature recovery and are aligned with local and national strategies aimed at enhancing biodiversity. Eight potential site allocations overlap with a Biodiversity Opportunity Area, including seven potential housing allocations and one potential employment allocation, namely:

⁶ AECOM (2024). 'Report for Habitats Regulations Assessment: South Kesteven Local Plan'.

- SKPR-58 (residential)
- SKPR-61 (residential)
- SKPR-83 (residential)
- SKPR-103 (residential)
- SKPR-120 (residential)
- SKPR-247 (residential); and
- SKPR-202 (employment).

6.23 All but seven of the potential site allocations also overlap with Green Infrastructure Opportunity Areas. Where appropriate, the individual policies for the sites that are within Green Infrastructure Opportunity Areas or Green Infrastructure Opportunity Areas acknowledge the presence of these designations and includes text to specify that any proposals on the site should adhere to principles set out in New Policy 4: Biodiversity Opportunity and Delivering Measurable Net Gains and/or Policy EN3 Green Infrastructure, respectively. This is further considered within the appraisal of the plan policies in **Chapter 7** of this Interim SA Report.

6.24 All the potential site allocations carried forward in the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan have the potential for protected species to inhabit them. However, numerous sites also offer significant opportunities for enhancing on-site biodiversity to support improvements in local and sub-regional ecological networks.

Landscape

6.25 The Local Plan area does not overlap with the boundaries of a National Park, National Landscape (formerly 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty') or Green Belt Land. With regard to the wider landscape, all of the potential site allocations for housing and employment land are located further than 15 km from the nearest nationally protected landscape.

6.26 Despite the absence of any nearby national landscape designations, there are several landscape areas within South Kesteven District (including the district's towns and villages) which are highly sensitive to development, as identified in local landscape sensitivity studies. In this respect, the delivery of 2,901 new dwellings and at least 79.5 ha of new employment land during the plan period has the potential to have impacts on landscape and townscape character if not appropriately located and designed.

6.27 Two potential residential allocations (SKPR-74; SKPR-241) and one potential employment allocation (SKPR-55) contain Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) which intersect the site boundary. It is anticipated that these features will be incorporated into the design of new development areas.

Historic Environment

6.28 Whilst none of the potential site allocations contain a listed building or scheduled monument within their site boundary, several have at least one of these assets in proximity.

6.29 The centre point of two potential site allocations is within 250 m of a Grade I listed building:

- SKPR-241 (residential allocation, 179 m from 'Church of St Sebastian'); and
- SKPR-242 (residential allocation, 201 m from 'Church of St Nicholas').

6.30 One additional potential residential allocation's centre point is located within 250 m of a Grade II* Listed Building: SKPR-26 (residential allocation, 171 m from 'Priory Farmhouse').

6.31 Finally, seven of the potential site allocations are within 250 m of a Grade II listed building:

- SKPR-26 (residential allocation, 186 m from 'Three table tombs 6 yards from south side of church of St. James)
- SKPR-56 (residential allocation, 205 m from '18, High Street')
- SKPR-74 (residential allocation, 200 m from 'Stable block 10 metres north of Gregory Arms public house)
- SKPR-103 (residential allocation, 249 m from '70, High Street')
- SKPR-241 (residential allocation, 174 m from '1, Pond Street')
- SKPR-55 (employment allocation, 199 m from '2 barns and outbuilding at Towngate Farm'); and
- SKPR-268 (residential and employment allocation, 168 m from 'Church of St John the Evangelist').

6.32 The centre point of one potential site allocation is located within 250 m of a scheduled monument: SKPR-26 (residential allocation, 190 m from 'Village cross and lock-up, Deeping St James').

6.33 Turning to conservation areas, the centre point of four potential site allocations is within 250 m of one of these designations:

- SKPR-26 (residential allocation, 49 m from 'Deeping St James Conservation Area')
- SKPR-103 (residential allocation, 172 m from 'Billingsborough Conservation Area')
- SKPR-241 (residential allocation, 132 m from 'Great Gonerby Conservation Area'); and
- SKPR-242 (residential allocation, 66 m from 'Barkston Conservation Area'). This site's boundary is adjacent to the conservation area boundary.

6.34 Development at sites in proximity of listed buildings, scheduled monuments and conservation areas should give careful consideration to its impact on the setting and significance of heritage assets locally and would likely require consultation with Historic England later in the planning process.

6.35 It is recognised that the potential site allocations may also contain non-designated heritage assets and features which are sensitive from new development. In this respect, the Historic Environment Record (HER) will be reviewed in further detail during the SA Report accompanying the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan to determine the potential impacts to non-designated heritage assets and features. Policy provisions with respect to safeguarding the integrity of designated and non-designated heritage assets is explored in the appraisal of plan policies (see **Chapter 7** of this Interim SA Report).

Air, Land, Soil, and Water Resources

6.36 There is one Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in South Kesteven District, located in Grantham's town centre: AQMA 1573, monitored for nitrogen dioxide levels. One of the potential site allocations, SKPR-268, partially overlaps with the AQMA designation. Therefore, the cumulative / in-combination impacts of new development at this location may adversely impact air quality. However, given that this potential site allocation is in proximity to the most sustainable location in the district (in terms of access and connectivity to public transport networks), this may help to limit the potential impacts on traffic and local air quality associated with new development areas by supporting a modal shift from using private vehicles. This is further considered in the transport appraisal section below.

6.37 Regarding soil resources, seventeen of the potential site allocations proposed through the Local Plan are predominantly underlain by Grade 3 agricultural land. In the absence of a detailed agricultural land classification at these locations it is currently not possible to distinguish between areas of sub-grade 3a land (BMV) and sub-grade 3b land (not BMV). Therefore, development at these sites has the potential to result in the loss of high-quality agricultural land, with an element of uncertainty at this stage.

6.38 A further eight of the potential site allocations contain areas of Grade 2 agricultural land, which is the 'best and most versatile' (BMV) land for agricultural purposes. These sites are:

- SKPR-53 (residential allocation; 100% underlain by Grade 2 agricultural land)
- SKPR-56 (residential allocation; 93.68% underlain by Grade 2 agricultural land)
- SKPR-71 (residential allocation; 100% underlain by Grade 2 agricultural land)
- SKPR-83 (residential allocation; 96.74% underlain by Grade 2 agricultural land)
- SKPR-109 (residential allocation; 100% underlain by Grade 2 agricultural land)
- SKPR-241 (residential allocation; 100% underlain by Grade 2 agricultural land)

- SKPR-55 (employment allocation; 100% underlain by Grade 2 agricultural land); and
- SKPR-262 (employment allocation; 85.6% underlain by Grade 2 agricultural land).

6.39 None of the sites overlap with areas of Grade 1 agricultural land.

6.40 Development at locations underlain by Grade 2 agricultural land is therefore likely to result in the permanent loss of BMV agricultural land which cannot be mitigated.

6.41 As specified in NEW POLICY 2: Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land (see **Chapter 7** for further detail), sites of 1 ha or larger which result in the loss of BMV agricultural land will need to submit an agricultural land classification report setting out the justification for its loss. This will help to minimise the loss of productive land, and also help to ensure that high levels of inappropriate development do not take place in the open countryside. Additionally, the broader spatial strategy focusses development within and adjacent to key towns and villages in the district, including promoting the regeneration of brownfield sites where possible. In doing so, this further protect the integrity of the district's BMV agricultural land from unnecessary development.

6.42 In terms of water quality, the Environment Agency states that groundwater source protection zones (SPZs) such as wells, boreholes and springs provide a significant supply of public drinking water. Particularly, development proposals within SPZ 1 have a higher potential to cause pollution in the area. In this context, eight of the potential site allocations are within the boundaries of SPZ 3. Six sites are within SPZ 1 or 2 (five of which also fall within the eight sites that are within an SPZ 3 boundary), namely:

- SKPR-53 (SPZ 3, 98% overlap; SPZ 2, 13% overlap)
- SKPR-61 (SPZ 1, 100% overlap; SPZ 2, 100% overlap; SPZ 3, 100% overlap)
- SKPR-83 (SPZ 3, 100% overlap; SPZ 2, 63% overlap)
- SKPR-103 (SPZ 1, 87% overlap; SPZ 3, 87% overlap; SPZ 2, 86% overlap)
- SKPR-135 (SPZ 2, 100% overlap; SPZ 3, 100% overlap); and
- SKPR-247 (SPZ 2, 100% overlap; SPZ 3, 100% overlap).

6.43 It is also worth noting that three sites (SKPR-53, Car Dyke Drain; SKPR-83, Car Dyke Drain; and SKPR-117, Barrowby Stream) overlap with a waterbody, which will require developments at these particular locations to carefully consider its impact on local flood risk.

6.44 Finally for water resources, the entirety of all the potential site allocations overlap with a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone (NVZ).

6.45 Mineral safeguarding area (MSA) designations cover large areas of South Kesteven District, with the majority of the district's south-western and north-eastern regions covered by an MSA. Consequently, eight of the potential site allocations overlap with an MSA. These are:

- SKPR-26 (residential allocation; Sand and Gravel Minerals Safeguarding Area, 100% overlap)
- SKPR-58 (residential allocation; Limestone Mineral Safeguarding Area, 100% overlap)
- SKPR-109 (residential allocation; Sand and Gravel Minerals Safeguarding Area, 100% overlap)
- SKPR-120 (residential allocation; Limestone Mineral Safeguarding Area, 100% overlap)
- SKPR-144 (residential allocation; Sand and Gravel Minerals Safeguarding Area, 100% overlap)
- SKPR-247 (residential allocation; Limestone Mineral Safeguarding Area, 100% overlap)
- SKPR-266 (residential allocation; Limestone Mineral Safeguarding Area, 98% overlap); and
- SKPR-55 (employment allocation; Sand and Gravel Minerals Safeguarding Area, 100% overlap).

6.46 As the South Kesteven's MSAs cover large areas of the district, the potential site allocations are less likely to significantly impact the integrity of these mineral resources. Nevertheless, using a precautionary approach, the respective policies for seven of the eight sites listed above specify that a Minerals Assessment will be required to accompany any planning application on the site. As site SKPR-55 is identified as being in a Sand and Gravel Minerals Safeguarding Area, its policy would also benefit from requiring an accompanying Minerals Assessment for any planning application on the site.

6.47 No potential site allocations are overlap with, or are within, a Mineral Consultation Area.

Climate Change

6.48 The delivery of 2,901 dwellings, and at least 79.5 ha of new employment land, during the Plan period has the potential to significantly increase the built footprint of South Kesteven District, with associated increases in greenhouse gas emissions. However, the extent to which this takes place on a per capita basis depends on the implementation of policies designed to limit emissions, which is explored further in **Chapter 7**.

6.49 Approximately 81% of the potential residential site allocations (excluding windfall sites) are located in the district's Sub-Regional Centre (Grantham, 50 percentage points) and three Market Towns (Stamford, Bourne and the Deepings, 31 percentage points, collectively). The remaining 19% of the new residential site allocations is split 14 percentage points to Larger Villages and five percentage points to 'Other Settlements'. By focussing the new allocations in the district's largest settlements, this will help ensure that new development areas are predominantly located in proximity of settlements with the largest range of services and facilities. This will support a limitation of greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the need to travel to amenities and encouraging the use of alternative modes of transport.

6.50 With further reference to climate change mitigation, the sustainability performance of the Local Plan's spatial strategy largely 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. These elements have also been considered in the commentary in **Chapter 7**.

6.51 In terms of climate change adaptation, 24 of the potential site allocations lie within Flood Zone 1. None of the remaining new site allocations are located wholly within a Flood Risk Zone; however, the remaining three potential site allocations are identified as lying partially within or adjacent to Flood Risk Zones 2 and/or 3 and will require mitigation to alleviate / reduce the extent of the potential negative effects. These sites are:

- SKPR-53 (residential allocation; Flood Zone 2, 18.18%; Flood Zone 3, 0.05%)
- SKPR-58 (residential allocation; Flood Zone 2, 10.63%; Flood Zone 3, 3.72%); and
- SKPR-83 (residential allocation; Flood Zone 2, 2.66%; Flood Zone 3, 1.21%).

6.52 It is useful to note that for all three sites, a maximum of 20% of the total area is impacted by Flood Zone 2 or 3 designations, associated with rivers or streams that intersect the site boundaries (meaning the extent of the flood zones are primarily centred alongside / adjacent to the watercourse corridor). Consequently, development at these sites may be able to avoid the areas at risk of flooding by located development away from the higher risk land. Additionally, it is expected that the provisions of the NPPF (and sequential testing) will direct new development away from areas which have a high flood risk potential.

Population and Community

6.53 The Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan will deliver 2,901 new dwellings during the Plan period. All 23 potential residential/mixed-use allocations are large enough (in actual site size or proposed number of dwellings) to trigger the need to deliver dwellings in affordable tenures, as required by updated Policy H2 Affordable Housing Contributions. This will ensure that local affordable housing need can be addressed on all of the potential site allocations.

6.54 Approximately 81% of the potential residential site allocations (excluding windfall sites) are located in the district's Sub-Regional Centre (Grantham, 50 percentage points) and three Market Towns (Stamford, Bourne and the Deepings, 31 percentage points, collectively). The remaining 19% of the potential residential site allocations is split 14 percentage points to Larger Villages and five percentage points to 'Other Settlements'. Additionally, at least 79.5 ha of new employment sites is allocated in the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan. These sites are also predominantly located in Grantham and the district's three Market Towns. Prioritising development in the district's major centres offers significant advantages by ensuring that they are already located close to existing services and facilities. This is evident with the potential site allocations, with many of the new sites being located in proximity of town centres and key services / facilities. Further details are provided below:

- Two potential site allocations are within 1 km of the nearest town centre boundary (SKPR-144, residential allocation; and SKPR-268, mixed-use allocation).
- All but one of the potential residential allocations/mixed-use allocations are located within 1 km of a primary school (the exception is SKPR-83). In contrast, of the new employment site allocations, only SKPR-55 is within 1 km of a primary school.
- Five of the potential residential allocations/mixed-use allocations are located within 1 km of a secondary school, whilst none of the new employment allocations are within 1 km of a secondary school.
- Nine of the potential residential / mixed-use allocations and two of the employment allocations are within 1 km of a surgery; and
- Seventeen of the potential residential / mixed-use allocations and two of the new employment allocations are located within 1 km of a shop.

Health and Wellbeing

6.55 As mentioned under the Population and Community appraisal, above, the majority of the potential site allocations are located in proximity of local town centres and / or services and facilities. This has the potential to encourage people to make healthier journeys by active travel methods (e.g. walking or cycling) instead of private/public transport options. Additionally, each potential allocation is located within 1 km of a Public Right of Way (PRoW), with 16 of them having a PRoW within 250 m. Being located close to PRoW not only promotes healthier modes of transport to local services and amenities, but also grants access to the surrounding countryside, which inherently contributes to various health benefits (including physical and mental wellbeing).

6.56 On a related note, regarding the health benefits of green spaces, all but one of the potential site allocations benefit from being located within 250 m of the nearest Green Infrastructure Opportunity Area (GIOA) (the exception is SKPR-100, employment allocation, which is 299 m of a GIOA). GIOA refers to areas of the district identified in Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership Green Infrastructure Mapping that could benefit from the safeguarding or enhancement of green infrastructure. Six potential site allocations overlap with a GIOA, namely:

- SKPR-58 (residential allocation; opportunity for management, 100% overlap)
- SKPR-62 (residential allocation; opportunity for management, 97% overlap)
- SKPR-135 (residential allocation; opportunity for management, 97% overlap)
- SKPR-241 (residential allocation; opportunity for management, 100% overlap); and
- SKPR-55 (employment allocation; opportunity for management, 69% overlap).

6.57 The respective policies for four of the five sites listed above specify that developments on the site are required to incorporate the relevant principles for development within GIOA set out in Policy EN3 Green Infrastructure (see Chapter 7 for further detail). As site SKPR-55 is identified as also being located in a GIOA, its policy would also benefit from the inclusion of similar text.

6.58 Finally, with regard to nearby health services, nine of the potential residential / mixed-use allocations and two of the potential employment allocations benefit from being located within 1 km of a surgery.

Transport

6.59 To contribute towards the delivery of sustainable development across South Kesteven District, potential site allocations in the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan align with the adopted plan's development strategy. The strategy prioritises locating new development in the district's Sub-Regional Centre of Grantham, followed by the district's three Market Towns (Stamford, Bourne and the Deepings). By focussing the potential residential and employment allocations in the district's largest settlements, this minimises the need for long-distance travel. Travellers have easier access to existing public transport networks, reducing reliance on private vehicles and promoting more sustainable modes of transportation. Additionally, the proximity to larger settlements likely means that local transport infrastructure already exists (including roads, railways, footpaths, and bus routes), resulting in improved connectivity and efficiency for residents and commuters. This is evident as the centre point of all but one potential allocation (SKPR-71) is within 1 km of either a train station or a bus stop. All potential site allocations are located within 1 km of a Public Right of Way (PRoW). Further detail is provided below:

- Two potential site allocations are within 1 km of a train station:
 - SKPR-58 (residential allocation, 232 m from the nearest train station);
and
 - SKPR-268 (residential allocation, 78 m from the nearest train station).
- All potential site allocations but site SKPR-71 (residential allocation) has a bus stop within 1 km of the site's centre point, eight of which have a bus stop within 250 m.
- Every potential allocation is located within 1 km of a PRoW, with 16 of them having a PRoW within 250 m.

6.60 In addition to strategically locating development to support transport alternative transport methods to private vehicles, many of the potential individual site allocation policies encourage proposals to improve nearby active travel infrastructure.

6.61 Prioritising development in the district's major centres also presents notable advantages by increasing the likelihood that sites are situated near existing services and facilities. This is exemplified by the potential site allocations, as many of the sites are positioned in proximity of town centres and existing services / facilities.

Economic Vitality

6.62 The potential employment site allocations in the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan align with the adopted plan's development strategy, focussing economic development on Grantham in the first instance, followed by the other three market towns. This will support the economic vitality of these settlements, including through enhancing local economic offer and employment opportunities and supporting cultural activities.

6.63 The Regulation 18 Draft Plan includes allocations for circa 338(ha) of employment sites across the District, mostly located in Grantham or the Three Market Towns, which will revitalise local communities and improve the local economy. These are either introduced under Policy E2 (for the pure employment allocations) or Policy H1 (for mixed-use allocations), including:

- SKPR-288 (employment allocation of 3.90 ha in Stamford)
- SKPR-289 (employment allocation of 3.00 ha in Bourne)
- SKPR-55 (employment allocation of 4.20 ha in The Deepings)
- SKPR-262 (employment allocation of 6.28 ha in Long Bennington)
- SKPR-202 (employment allocation of 29.00 ha in Grantham)
- SKPR-100 (employment allocation of 63.70 ha in Grantham)
- SKPR-182 (employment allocation of 80.00 ha in Grantham)
- SKPR-278 (mixed-use allocation, including 11.00 ha employment site); and
- SKPR-268 (mixed-use allocation, including 0.06 ha land for a hotel, 0.08 ha for Small and Medium Enterprise, and 0.25 ha light industrial space in Grantham).

6.64 New sites SKPR-266 (residential allocation) and SKPR-55 (employment allocation) overlap with existing employment sites (87.33% and 99.75%, respectively). Regarding site SKPR-55, as the potential allocation is for an employment site, the new policy represents the safeguarding and expansion of the existing employment site. However, site SKPR-266 is proposed to be a residential allocation, which therefore represents a loss of an existing employment site. Although SKPR-266 will result in a reduction in employment land at the site, the updated Local Plan compensates for this through other potential site allocations, resulting in a net increase in employment land across the district.

7. Assessment of proposed updates to the Local Plan

7.1 This chapter presents the appraisal findings and recommendations for new and amended policies within the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan.

Approach to the appraisal

7.2 The appraisal of the policies in the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan has been presented through the nine SA themes.

7.3 Each theme begins with a brief summary of the conclusions in the adopted Local Plan's SA (2018).⁷

7.4 An appraisal is then undertaken for any new and updated policies in the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan. In undertaking the appraisal, the proposed policies are reviewed to determine which are likely to have a positive or negative environmental effect. This is followed by an appraisal of the relevant policy updates.

7.5 Where likely significant effects have been identified, these are described in summary tables for each SA theme.

7.6 Every effort is made to predict effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the strategic nature of the Local Plan Review document. The ability to predict effects accurately is also affected by the limitations of the baseline data. Because of the uncertainties involved, there is a need to exercise caution when identifying and evaluating significant effects and ensure assumptions are explained in full.⁸ In many instances it is not possible to predict significant effects, but it is possible to comment on merits (or otherwise) in more general terms.

Biodiversity and Geodiversity

7.7 A key SA objective is to preserve and enhance South Kesteven District's biodiversity and geodiversity. In the adopted Local Plan, this objective was directly addressed through policies in the 'Protecting and Enhancing the Natural and Built Environments' theme, alongside other supporting policies in relevant themes. The Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan includes several new and updated policies related to biodiversity and geodiversity, which will be examined in this appraisal.

Summary of the original conclusions for Biodiversity and Geodiversity in the SA for the adopted Local Plan

7.8 The spatial strategy outlined in the adopted Local Plan aims to limit and mitigate potential impacts on biodiversity within the South Kesteven District. Provisions are set out to protect designated nature conservation sites at international, national, and local levels. These provisions include avoiding

⁷ AECOM (June 2018). 'Sustainability Appraisal (SA) for the South Kesteven Local Plan (2011-2036): SA Report to accompany Regulation 19 consultation on the Local Plan'

⁸ As stated by Government Guidance (The Plan Making Manual, see [here](#)): "Ultimately, the significance of an effect is a matter of judgment and should require no more than a clear and reasonable justification"

impacts on sites, mitigating any unavoidable impacts, and compensating for any harm caused.

- 7.9 Additionally, there is a key focus on encouraging net gains for nature through the adopted Local Plan. Policies promoting open space, green infrastructure enhancements, and good quality design are intended to support ecological networks. They aim to retain important biodiversity features like trees and hedgerows and incorporate green infrastructure into new development areas. Measures for the protection of existing, and delivery of new, open space are also included. Furthermore, infrastructure development accompanying new development is expected to indirectly support habitats and species. Lastly, policies related to rural economy development also aim to protect habitats and species in designated village areas.
- 7.10 Whilst the adopted Local Plan aims to bolster open space provision and green infrastructure networks, the 2018 SA advised that policies could be improved by doing more to prioritise enhancing ecological networks within the district. To achieve this the adopted Local Plan could reiterate that opportunities should be sought to work collaboratively with other partners in the area to develop and deliver a strategic approach to protecting and improving the natural environment based on local priorities and evidence.
- 7.11 Additionally, given the important role of the South Kesteven's rivers and streams for sub-regional ecological networks the SA also recommended that the policies could be improved by supporting further enhancements to the biodiversity value of key watercourses in the district.

Appraisal of the new / updated policies within the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan (2021-2041)

- 7.12 Beginning with the new and amended policies under the 'Protecting and Enhancing the Natural and Built Environments' theme, they offer a range of additional enhancements of relevance to the Biodiversity and Geodiversity SA theme. EN2 Protecting Biodiversity and Geodiversity, strengthens the Plan's position regarding the delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) by specifying that it should be a consideration even for developments where BNG is not mandated. BNG is also the central focus for 'New Policy 4 Biodiversity Opportunity and Delivering Measurable Net Gains', which offers guidance on how the mandatory 10% BNG (as specified in the updated Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 [as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021]⁹) will be delivered in the district. The new policy also outlines the guiding principles for development within biodiversity opportunity areas and the Green Infrastructure Network. Additionally, a Local Nature Recovery Strategy is mandated (and will be overseen by the County Council). EN3 Green Infrastructure has been strengthened by requiring development proposals to consider the impact of the development on local green infrastructure by consulting local Green Infrastructure Mapping and relevant national evidence (which addresses one of the recommendations of the 2018 SA). Finally for policies under the 'Protecting and Enhancing the Natural and Built Environments' theme, text is added to EN6 The Historic Environment to ensure that developments in conservation areas should aim to retain (or replace where this is not possible) existing features, including trees and

⁹ Government (2021) *Schedule 14, Environment Act 2021*. Available [here](#)

hedges. These measures will play a vital role in safeguarding and enhancing the district’s ecological networks, ensuring that development will lead to beneficial, rather than adverse, effects.

7.13 Additional amendments of relevance to Biodiversity and Geodiversity have been made to policies carried over from the adopted Local Plan under several other themes in the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan. Firstly, Policy SD1 The Principles of Sustainable Development in South Kesteven has been updated to further emphasise South Kesteven District Council’s commitment to reach net zero by 2050. Relevant amendments include promoting the need to preserve/enhance green infrastructure for its use as a carbon store, which, in doing so, will also protect habitats within the district. Policy DE1 Promoting Good Quality Design has also been amended to include additional guidance regarding good design principles that developments in the district should follow. This includes text on how ‘green and blue infrastructure and nature’ should be an important consideration for developments at the early design stages. The additional references to blue infrastructure in the updated text addresses one of the recommendations of the 2018 SA.

Recommendations and updated appraisal summary

Likely Significant Effect	Effect Dimensions	Recommendations / mitigation	Comparison to Original Appraisal
Improved ecological resilience.	Direct, long-term, and positive.	None proposed.	Enhanced positive effects.
Improved ecological connectivity.	Direct, long-term, and positive.	None proposed.	Enhanced positive effects.
Increased habitat and greenspace through green and blue infrastructure enhancements.	Direct and indirect, long-term, and positive.	None proposed.	Enhanced positive effects.
Deliver net gains for nature	Direct, long-term, and positive.	None proposed.	Enhanced positive effects.
Strengthen ecological networks	Direct, long-term, and positive.	None proposed.	Enhanced positive effects.

Landscape

7.14 The Landscape SA objectives focus on policy changes that have the potential to impact key features within the district's landscape, including aesthetic beauty, historical and cultural significance, and ecological features.

Summary of the original conclusions for Landscape in the SA for the adopted Local Plan

7.15 South Kesteven emphasises the conservation and enhancement of its unique landscapes in the adopted Local Plan. Policies focus on protecting landscape character, preserving the fabric and setting of historic sites, and promoting local distinctiveness. Development proposals are required to align with the character and features of the landscape, contributing to its conservation or restoration. Policies also support sensitive development within settlements, emphasising the importance of maintaining existing built forms.

7.16 The adopted Plan includes measures to ensure that new development complements local character and identity, whilst also promoting high-quality design and the reuse of existing buildings.

7.17 Furthermore, policies are included to safeguard heritage assets and their settings, requiring proposals likely to harm their significance to justify how the benefits outweigh the harm. This will help to protect the landscape character of the built-environment in towns and villages across the district, which is a key contributor to local distinctiveness and sense of place.

7.18 Finally, the Plan integrates policies related to green infrastructure and sustainable transport to further enhance landscape character.

Appraisal of the new / updated policies within the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan (2021-2041)

7.19 The Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan includes new policies and minor amendments that relate to the Landscape SA theme.

7.20 Beginning with New Policy 5 Household Development, contained under the 'Built Environment' theme, the policy stipulates that alteration and extension of dwellings, or erection and conversion of curtilage buildings, will only be acceptable if the development gives due consideration to the surrounding area's landscape character. Amendments to Policy DE1 Promoting Good Quality Design, contained under the same theme, provides further protection for the district's landscape character from poorly-designed developments, specifying that proposals should be visually attractive and integrates into its wider surroundings (considering features such as settlement boundaries, views and landscape character). In summary, these new and amended policies focus on delivering high-quality design through new development areas, which will help to enhance the public realm and ensure that proposals respect their location and surroundings.

7.21 Also, under 'The Built Environment' theme, Policy DE1 has been amended to support a landscape-scale approach to blue and green infrastructure networks within the district. The inclusion of green infrastructure and natural features through design via sensitive landscaping will help to maintain the relationship

between the built and natural environment (i.e., by applying natural buffers along site boundaries, and screening of important viewpoints).

- 7.22 The other relevant policy amendments are contained within Policy SP3 Residential Development within Settlements, which reiterates that residential development within settlements boundaries would not be supported if they ‘extend the pattern of development beyond the existing built form’, which aligns well with the aforementioned additions to Policy DE1.

Recommendations and updated appraisal summary

Likely Significant Effect	Effect Dimensions	Recommendations / mitigation	Comparison to Original Appraisal
Enhanced landscape and townscape character, public realm, and local distinctiveness.	Direct and indirect, long-term, permanent, and positive.	None proposed.	Enhanced positive effects.

Historic Environment

- 7.23 South Kesteven District holds a distinct historical legacy, which has been preserved in numerous archaeological sites, historic structures, and landscapes. The Historic Environment SA objectives focus on policy changes that have the potential to impact the district’s historic environment assets and their setting.

Summary of the original conclusions for Historic Environment in the SA for the adopted Local Plan

- 7.24 The conservation and enhancement of South Kesteven's rich historic environment is a key consideration within the adopted Local Plan.
- 7.25 The adopted Plan includes policies specifically targeting the historic environment, aiming to conserve and enhance heritage assets and their settings. Development likely to harm heritage assets will be approved only if public benefits outweigh the harm. Proposals enhancing the setting of historic environment assets will be favoured. The adopted Local Plan also addresses the protection and better revealing of archaeological assets, emphasising in-situ preservation or adequate provision for excavation and recording during development.
- 7.26 Policies also focus on supporting landscape character, and are required to respect the character and attributes of the historic landscape, contributing to its conservation or enhancement. The adopted Local Plan promotes sensitive development within settlements, with attention to maintaining existing built forms. Conversion and reuse of rural buildings are encouraged to enhance local distinctiveness.
- 7.27 The adopted Local Plan also gives specific attention to conservation areas, aiming to protect and enhance their distinctiveness. Policies address potential impacts on the setting of conservation areas, promoting careful consideration and mitigation measures in development proposals.

- 7.28 Sustainable transport policies further reduce the impact of the transport network on the quality of the public realm, supporting townscape character and historic environment settings.
- 7.29 Overall, the adopted Local Plan's policies include several provisions which would ensure that heritage assets and areas (and their settings) are protected and enhanced through new development, including via sensitive design which respects the significance of the surrounding built environment.

Appraisal of the new / updated policies within the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan (2021-2041)

- 7.30 Policy EN6 provides a comprehensive overview of how the historic environment will be protected and enhanced - with specific reference to ensuring that proposals align with any relevant appraisals or management strategies, and provide a proportionate heritage impact assessment which considers the significance of any heritage assets or areas within or within proximity to the site boundaries.
- 7.31 Nonetheless, other policies have been strengthened, where appropriate, to provide further detail with respect to ensuring positive outcomes for the district's rich heritage.
- 7.32 SP3 Residential Development within Settlements has been updated with additional text to reiterate support for locating developments within, rather than outside of, existing settlement boundaries. This will help protect the existing historical settlement patterns across South Kesteven District.
- 7.33 New Policy 5 Householder Development (under 'The Built Environment' theme) has been added to the Plan to ensure that householder development does not significantly harm the surrounding environment, including the historic environment. Of specific relevance to this SA theme, the policy specifies that householder developments respect the significance and setting of any heritage assets.
- 7.34 Given the renewed focus on development within settlement boundaries, where most of the heritage assets and areas across the district are located, potential impacts will likely be influenced by the design of new development areas which come forward during the plan period. On this basis, Policy DE1 Promoting Good Quality Design (also under 'The Built Environment' theme), has been strengthened with regard to the protection it affords the historic environment. Specifically, text has been added to acknowledge that good quality design will ensure that the development is designed to integrate well into its wider surroundings, and gives due consideration to important historical features such as settlement boundaries, built form, and heritage assets.

Recommendations and updated appraisal summary

Likely Significant Effect	Effect Dimensions	Recommendations / mitigation	Comparison to Original Appraisal
Protection and enhancement of heritage assets (and their settings), including repair and reuse where appropriate.	Direct, long-term, permanent, and positive.	None proposed.	Enhanced positive effects.
Revitalisation of features and areas of historic environment value in the district.	Direct and indirect, long-term, permanent, and positive.	None proposed.	Enhanced positive effects.
Impacts to the built environment associated with the focus of new development areas within key towns and villages in the district	Direct and indirect, long-term, permanent, and positive	None proposed.	Mixed effects (dependent on the design of new development areas)
Protecting the integrity of non-designated heritage assets and areas by ensuring that any finds are appropriately documented and recorded	Direct, long-term, permanent, and positive.	None proposed.	Enhanced positive effects.
Preserving the special qualities of the built-environment which contribute to the setting of heritage assets and areas	Direct and indirect, long-term, permanent, and positive.	None proposed.	Enhanced positive effects.

Air, Land, Soil, and Water Resources

7.35 This section assesses the potential impacts of policy changes towards South Kesteven District's air, land, soil, and water resources (ALSW). The Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan includes new and amended policies relevant to the management of the district's ALSW, which are explored in this appraisal.

Summary of the original conclusions for Air, Land, Soil, and Water Resources in the SA for the adopted Local Plan

7.36 The adopted Local Plan prioritises development on brownfield sites, advocates for efficient land use, and emphasises sustainable development principles such as utilising vacant or underutilised land and buildings within settlements.

Additionally, the Plan aims to preserve the best agricultural land for food production by discouraging its use for renewable energy projects.

- 7.37 Regarding resource efficiency, the Plan emphasises energy and resource efficiency in new housing and employment areas. It encourages minimal resource use, high environmental standards in design and construction, and waste reduction. Policies support energy-efficient design, renewable energy provision, water efficiency, and sustainable materials use.
- 7.38 Related to air and noise quality, the Plan promotes sustainable transport to reduce emissions and minimise the need for car travel. Development should support transport infrastructure improvements, reduce the need for travel, and enhance public transport, walking, and cycling networks. Policies also aim to enhance green infrastructure, which aids in absorbing pollutants, reducing noise, and managing water runoff.
- 7.39 Environmental quality is safeguarded through policies that control pollution and mitigate adverse environmental effects from development. These policies ensure that any potential pollution or harm is mitigated to an acceptable level through environmental controls or measures within development proposals.

Appraisal of the new / updated policies within the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan (2021-2041)

- 7.40 The Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan contains new and amended policies that will impact the Plan's impact on local air, land, soil, and water resources.
- 7.41 Firstly, text has been added to Policy SD1 The Principles of Sustainable Development in South Kesteven to emphasises the preservation and enhancement of the district's natural resource quality. For developments to be considered sustainable they must minimise the use of resources, with efficient use of energy and water highlighted as two items of particular importance. Additionally, the policy is strengthened by encouraging developments to reuse construction materials on site.
- 7.42 New Policy 2 Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land is comprised of an amended section of adopted Local Plan Policy SP1, which has been moved to its own new policy for clarity. The additional text in New Policy 2 requires that developments of '...one hectare or larger which would result in the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land, must submit an agricultural land classification report, setting out the justification for such a loss and this criterion has been met'. These assessments will ensure that when a large loss of the district's best and most versatile agricultural land is proposed, the decision to approve or reject the development will have given due regard to the loss of this resource. Additionally, text has been included to ensure that the impacts of developments on ongoing agricultural operations is minimised at the design stage. These provisions will safeguard the open countryside from inappropriate development. However, it is recognised that greenfield site allocations which come forward during the plan period may result in the permanent loss of areas of productive agricultural land, which cannot be mitigated.
- 7.43 New and amended policies throughout the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan recognise the importance of maintaining and delivering good quality blue and green infrastructure in the district (including policies SD1 The Principles of Sustainable Development in South Kesteven, EN2 Protecting Biodiversity and

Geodiversity, EN3 Green Infrastructure, and DE1 Promoting Good Quality Design). Whilst these new or amended policies will not directly impact ALSW, there will likely be indirect benefits by supporting the resilience of the natural environment, safeguarding soil and water quality, and increasing the percentage cover of natural features which absorb pollutants.

7.44 Finally, the inclusion of New Policy 3 New Community Services and Facilities, and amendments to DE1 Promoting Good Quality Design and SB1 Sustainable Building, bolster the Local Plan's desire for development to facilitate a larger uptake in public/active transport journeys within the district. In doing so, this will likely result in positive effects to local air quality.

Recommendations and updated appraisal summary

Likely Significant Effect	Effect Dimensions	Recommendations / mitigation	Comparison to Original Appraisal
Loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land in the district.	Direct, long-term, permanent, and negative.	Policies strengthened to require new development proposals above 1ha to be accompanied by an ALC report.	Uncertain effects.
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.	None proposed.	Enhanced positive effects.
Limitation of the effects of housing and employment growth on existing air quality issues in the district.	Direct, long-term, permanent, and positive.	None proposed.	Enhanced positive effects.
Limitation of water use from new development in the District.	Direct, long-term, permanent, and positive.	None proposed.	Enhanced positive effects.
Limitation of using new resources for construction, for example, by using recycled materials.	Direct, long-term, permanent, and positive.	None proposed.	Enhanced positive effects.

Climate Change

7.45 A key SA objective is to address the causes of climate change through reducing South Kesteven District's carbon footprint. In the adopted Local Plan, this objective was addressed through policies across several themes. In the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan, a brand-new theme called 'Climate Change and Energy' has been introduced to provide a more focussed spotlight on how the district will address issues related to climate change. The new and amended policies relevant to climate change will be the focus of this section's appraisal.

Summary of the original conclusions for Climate Change in the SA for the adopted Local Plan

Climate Change Mitigation

7.46 The adopted Local Plan prioritises addressing climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, particularly focussing on energy efficiency in new housing and employment developments. It also encourages renewable energy integration, supporting various renewable energy technologies.

7.47 To reduce the need for travel and promote sustainable transport, the Plan emphasises locating developments where services can be accessed by foot, bike, or public transport. It supports transport improvements, minimises additional car journeys, and enhances public transport, walking, and cycling networks. Overall, the Plan aims to mitigate climate change impacts by promoting energy efficiency, renewable energy, and sustainable transport options in development.

Climate Change Adaptation

7.48 The adopted Local Plan acknowledges the need to adapt to a changing climate, with consideration given to the district's geography and environmental vulnerabilities. Green infrastructure is recognised as a crucial tool for managing environmental risks like flooding and heat waves. Efforts are made to incorporate green infrastructure features into new developments, protect existing open spaces, and provide new ones. Additionally, flood risk reduction measures include flood risk assessments for developments in flood-prone areas, avoidance of increased risk elsewhere, and integration of climate change considerations. Policies also encourage sustainable drainage techniques and relocation of developments away from flood risk areas. The provisions of these policies encourages opportunities to support the district's resilience to the impacts of climate change.

Appraisal of the new / updated policies within the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan (2021-2041)

7.49 Since the publication of the adopted Local Plan, South Kesteven have announced their ambition to reach net zero for the district by 2050. To reflect this ambition, certain policies have been strengthened to set the district on its way towards its net zero target.

7.50 Firstly SD1 The Principles of Sustainable Development in South Kesteven adds additional text to emphasise the importance of energy efficiency and reuse of construction materials, as well as support for development proposals that

proactively improve the district’s ability to store carbon through green infrastructure.

- 7.51 Additionally with respect to Policy SD1, the original policy in the adopted Local Plan highlights that developments ‘include measures to take account of future changes in the climate’. The updated version of Policy SD1 refines this requirement to ‘...take account of projected scenarios in the climate locally’. By doing so, the policy has become more measurable and local, which is likely to lead to an enhancement in positive effects.
- 7.52 With further respect to climate change mitigation, ‘The Built Environment’ theme includes addition text in two amended policies, strengthening their position with regard to the Climate Change SA theme. Policy DE1 Promoting Good Quality Design emphasises the importance of new developments being designed to prioritise low-carbon travel options (i.e. active and public transport). Additionally, the policy also specifies that good development design should protect and enhance the district’s green infrastructure, which (along with the associated ecological benefits) will act as a local carbon store. Finally, the policy also adds text to encourage developments to embrace low carbon construction and operation, for example, through energy efficient schemes, use of renewable energy, and use of long-lasting materials. These sentiments are further developed in Policy SB1 Sustainable Building, which requires new developments to be ‘zero carbon ready’ and to be located appropriately so that the need to travel is reduced.
- 7.53 In addition to Policies DE1 and SB1, which encourage the uptake of active and public transport through development, New Policy 3 New Community Services and Facilities has been added to the Plan, and also includes text to achieve this objective. By encouraging opportunities to support a modal shift to sustainable and active travel, this will support a limitation of emissions in the district by reducing the reliance on private vehicles to complete daily activities.
- 7.54 Finally, the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan notes that Policy RE1 Renewable Energy Generation, under the new ‘Climate Change and Energy’ theme, will be reviewed upon the publication of a Climate Change Study commissioned by South Kesteven District Council. Additions to this policy (such as advise on energy efficiency standards, and appropriate renewable energy site typologies and locations) will likely lead to enhanced positive effects.

Recommendations and updated appraisal summary

Likely Significant Effect	Effect Dimensions	Recommendations / mitigation	Comparison to Original Appraisal
Limitation in greenhouse gas emissions resulting from growth through reducing need to travel and supporting modal shift.	Direct and indirect, long-term, permanent, and positive.	None proposed.	Enhanced positive effects.
Limitation in greenhouse gas emissions resulting	Direct and indirect, long-term,	None proposed.	Enhanced positive effects.

Likely Significant Effect	Effect Dimensions	Recommendations / mitigation	Comparison to Original Appraisal
from growth through the development of low carbon and renewable energy installations and the promotion of energy efficient development.	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.	None proposed.	Enhanced positive effects.

Population and Community

7.55 The Population and Community SA Objectives focus on updates to policies that seek to support balanced and inclusive communities with a strong community identity. The Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan introduces new relevant policies relating to neighbourhood quality and housing, as well as adding text to existing policies carried over from the adopted Local Plan.

Summary of the original conclusions for Population and Community in the SA for the adopted Local Plan

7.56 The adopted Local Plan aims to address housing needs by facilitating the provision of new dwellings over the plan period, with provisions to exceed assessed needs to account for previous shortfalls and future adjustments. Challenges such as housing affordability are recognised, with policies in place to ensure the inclusion of affordable housing in larger developments. The plan also addresses the needs of specific demographics, including older and younger populations, self-builders, and those requiring specialist housing.

7.57 Policies are included to focus on promoting good quality design, sustainability, and the provision of necessary infrastructure to support community vitality.

7.58 Settlement hierarchy guidelines prioritise development in market towns while also supporting smaller settlements with adequate services. Additionally, policies aim to reduce the need for car travel and enhance accessibility through sustainable transport modes and green infrastructure provisions.

7.59 Overall, the Plan seeks to create vibrant communities by ensuring access to essential services and facilities, promoting sustainable transport options, and enhancing green spaces for residents' well-being and quality of life.

Appraisal of the new / updated policies within the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan (2021-2041)

7.60 The Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan identifies a number of shortlisted sites for a potential housing allocation to meet emerging needs during the plan period up until 2041. The shortlisting process has been informed by the findings of a detailed site assessment process which contributes to the evidence base for

the Local Plan. Detailed spatial strategy options (i.e., growth scenarios) will be explored in the SA Report accompanying the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan. **Chapter 6** (Commentary on Potential Site Allocations) in this report presents an overview of the key constraints and opportunities of the initial shortlisted sites.

- 7.61 Two amended policies related to the provision of new housing within the district are included under the 'Meeting Housing Needs' theme. Supporting mixed and balanced communities, Policy H2, has been amended to stipulate that affordable housing should be delivered on developments with ten or more units, lowering the previous threshold from eleven units. The policy has also been updated to include that the rate of affordable housing to be delivered will be determined by a Whole Plan Viability Assessment. This assessment will recommend a rate between 27% and 57%, replacing the previous fixed rates of 20% or 30% depending on the scheme. New text in Policy H2 also stresses the importance of delivering dwellings offered in affordable tenures on site (unless there are exceptional circumstances). Overall, these amendments are likely to lead to a greater number of, and more appropriately located, dwellings in affordable tenures being delivered in the district.
- 7.62 Policy H2 has also been amended to provide specific tenure splits for affordable housing and First Homes discount levels. Specifically, a 60-40 tenure split between affordable rent and affordable ownership tenures is proposed, whilst 'at least' a 30% discount on full market value is expected for dwellings in First Homes tenures. This part of the policy may be further strengthened by explicitly saying that the 40% or 50% discount levels would also be expected in areas where affordability is a major constraint (e.g. where it can be demonstrated that the 30% discount levels would only benefit a small minority of the local population).
- 7.63 To enhance inclusivity across a broader segment of society, Policy H4 now includes additional text specifying that developments with ten or more dwellings must provide at least 10% of new dwellings as 'accessible and adaptable' units, in line with Part M4(2) of the Building Regulations, ensuring that another housing need type within the district is addressed.
- 7.64 Policy 3 New Community Services and Facilities is formed of amended text taken from Policy SP6 in the adopted Local Plan. The new policy offers guiding principles for the provision of community services and facilities that relevant developments should follow. It outlines the importance of community facilities being easily accessible (preferably by active/public transport), adaptable to future change, and of benefit to the local community.
- 7.65 The remaining new and amended policies relevant to this SA theme fall under 'The Built Environment' theme. Policies DE1 Promoting Good Quality Design, New Policy 5 Householder Development, SB1 Sustainable Building, and OS1 Open Space and Recreation complement each other to ensure that new development will benefit to the district's existing and future population. Specifically, they require developments to:
- Be visually attractive and well-designed places to live and work (DE1; New Policy 5).

- Improve accessibility and not have an adverse impact on local transport infrastructure (DE1; New Policy 5; SB1).
- Provide appropriate green and blue infrastructure (DE1).
- Deliver appropriate local services and facilities (DE1).
- Improve energy efficiency (DE1; SB1); and
- Be adaptable to future working conditions (e.g. by providing high-speed digital connectivity) (DE1).

7.66 These policies complement each other to improve the quality of the public realm and the attractiveness of towns and villages as places to live and work, supporting energy efficiency through design (which is important given the cost-of-living crisis), enhancing accessibility and enabling residents to feel more connected to locations (thus reducing social isolation).

7.67 Finally, it is worth noting that Policy H6 Travelling Showpeople in the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan may be reviewed upon the publication of South Kesteven District Council’s ‘Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment’ (2023). Additions to this policy will be explored within the SA Report accompanying the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan.

Recommendations and updated appraisal summary

Likely Significant Effect	Effect Dimensions	Recommendations / mitigation	Comparison to Original Appraisal
Housing provision takes full account of housing need.	Direct, long-term, permanent, and positive overall.	None proposed.	Enhanced positive effects.
Increased delivery of affordable housing.	Direct, long-term, permanent, and positive overall.	None proposed.	Enhanced positive effects.
Enhanced provision of community infrastructure.	Direct, long-term, permanent, and positive.	None proposed.	Enhanced positive effects.
Improved access to services and facilities.	Direct, long-term, permanent, and positive overall.	None proposed.	Enhanced positive effects.
Increased use of sustainable transport modes, including public transport and walking and cycling.	Direct, long-term, permanent, and positive overall.	None proposed.	Enhanced positive effects.
Maintain and enhance the vitality of communities by locating housing where it sustains	Direct, long-term, permanent, and positive overall.	None proposed.	Enhanced positive effects.

Likely Significant Effect	Effect Dimensions	Recommendations / mitigation	Comparison to Original Appraisal
balanced communities.			
A focus on delivering appropriate housing for all residents and community groups (including those with protected characteristics).	Direct, long-term, permanent, and positive overall.	None proposed.	No change.

Health and Wellbeing

7.68 The Health and Wellbeing SA objective focusses on updates to policies that seek to improve health outcomes within South Kesteven District. The Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan introduces new relevant policies relating to health and wellbeing as well as adding text to existing policies carried over from the adopted Local Plan.

Summary of the original conclusions for Health and Wellbeing in the SA for the adopted Local Plan

7.69 Health and wellbeing in the district are influenced by various factors, including access to services and facilities, transportation options, green infrastructure, housing quality, and community safety. The adopted Local Plan aims to protect and enhance the built and natural environment to promote recreation, relaxation, and air quality benefits. Policies ensure the provision of open spaces within new developments and protect existing green infrastructure. The Plan also promotes sustainable transportation modes and reduces the need for car travel, improving air and noise quality and encouraging active travel. Additionally, it focusses on enhancing accessibility to services and facilities through strategic development planning.

7.70 Moreover, the adopted Local Plan emphasises the quality of housing by promoting good design standards and sustainable building practices. It also addresses the needs of specific groups such as Gypsies and Travellers. Policies aim to deliver affordable housing and meet objectively assessed housing needs, indirectly supporting improved health outcomes, and reducing health inequalities. Overall, the plan aims to create a supportive environment that positively impacts residents' physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Appraisal of the new / updated policies within the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan (2021-2041)

7.71 New and amended policies throughout the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan recognise the importance of delivering good quality green infrastructure for its multi-faceted benefits (including mental and physical health benefits). Amendments to Policies SD1 The Principles of Sustainable Development in South Kesteven, EN3 Green Infrastructure, and DE1 Promoting Good Quality Design emphasise the importance of maintaining and improving green and blue infrastructure within the district. Policy OS1 Open Space and Recreation has

been updated to stipulate that developments providing open space must demonstrate that their design takes into account the findings of the Open Space, Sport, and Recreation Study (2023). This requirement aims to enhance the quality of new open spaces. Overall, these policies aim to safeguard and facilitate the creation of a more appealing public environment. They promote opportunities for both residents and visitors to engage with appropriately designed open spaces, thereby benefitting from the associated mental and physical health advantages that come from spending time in such areas.

7.72 On a related note, it is also important that Green Infrastructure is easily accessible so that these benefits can be realised by as much of the local population as possible. Again, several new and amended policies aim to improve connectivity within the district, including Policies DE1, SB1 Sustainable Building, and New Policy 3 New Community Services and Facilities.

7.73 Finally, the aforementioned Policy DE1 has undergone additional amendments related to the SA theme, all aimed at enhancing the quality of developments within the district. Specifically, the policy now emphasises the importance of delivering schemes that promote healthy lifestyles, foster social interaction, provide high-quality and inclusive public spaces, and feature well-designed homes in suitable locations to meet a variety of needs. This will support the wellbeing of residents through promoting mixed and balanced communities which aim to meet the needs of all groups.

Recommendations and updated appraisal summary

Likely Significant Effect	Effect Dimensions	Recommendations / mitigation	Comparison to Original Appraisal
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.	None proposed.	Enhanced positive effects.
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.	None proposed.	Enhanced positive effects.
Enhancements to strategic and local green infrastructure networks, promoting leisure and recreational opportunities and active lifestyles.	Indirect, long-term, permanent, and positive.	None proposed.	Enhanced positive effects.

Likely Significant Effect	Effect Dimensions	Recommendations / mitigation	Comparison to Original Appraisal
Enhanced provision of community infrastructure.	Direct, long-term, permanent, and positive overall.	None proposed.	Enhanced positive effects.
Focus on the quality of new development which promotes health and wellbeing for all.	Direct, long-term, permanent, and positive overall.	None proposed.	Enhanced positive effects.

Transport

7.74 The Transport SA Objectives focus on updates to policies that deliver air quality improvements and improve the local transport network within the district. The Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan includes new and amended policies that aim to make South Kesteven District a well-connected place to live and work.

Summary of the original conclusions for Transport in the SA for the adopted Local Plan

7.75 To support community vitality, policies in the adopted Local Plan ensure the retention and provision of essential services and facilities. The settlement hierarchy prioritises development in market towns while also considering accessibility and services in smaller settlements. The focus of development within key locations across the district ensures that new homes and employment land is delivered in sustainable locations with respect to access and connectivity to public transport networks.

7.76 The adopted Local Plan also includes policies that enhance road safety and reduce air / noise pollution. The Plan acknowledges the existing reliance on private cars in many areas, but seeks to mitigate this through policies that enhance accessibility to services and facilities, for example, by appropriately locating developments and improving public transport, walking, and cycling infrastructure. The provisions of these policies will also help to support a modal shift towards sustainable travel in the district.

Appraisal of the new / updated policies within the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan (2021-2041)

7.77 The new and amended policies in the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan of relevance to the Transport SA here predominantly fall under 'The Built Environment Theme'. These policies, such as DE1 (Promoting Good Quality Design) and SB1 (Sustainable Building), work together to reinforce the Local Plan's goal of promoting active and public transport in the district. They achieve this by encouraging opportunities to improve public transport infrastructure, strategically locating developments to reduce the need for travel, and designing spaces that encourage the use of active transport modes accessible to all. Additionally, amendments to New Policy 3 New Community Services and Facilities, under the 'Protecting Existing Community Facilities and Providing New Facilities' theme, also encourage the improvement of the district's active/public transport options.

7.78 Policy DE1 and New Policy 5 Householder Development acknowledges that private transport will inevitably still play a part in the district’s future, and advises that well-designed developments will include parking that integrates within the setting of the development’s location and will not adversely impact the local transport network.

7.79 NEW POLICY 1: Rural Exception Schemes aims to define the criteria under which a rural exception site (RES) would be deemed acceptable. To enhance this policy, it could include a requirement that proposals for RES sites demonstrate that opportunities to improve local accessibility have been considered.

Recommendations and updated appraisal summary

Likely Significant Effect	Effect Dimensions	Recommendations / mitigation	Comparison to Original Appraisal
Promote active and public transport journeys across the district.	Direct, long-term, permanent, and positive.	None proposed.	Enhanced positive effects.
Improved access to services, facilities, and amenities.	Direct, long-term, permanent, and positive.	Policies could be strengthened or introduced to improve accessibility and connectivity within the more rural locations across the district.	Enhanced positive effects.

Economic Vitality

7.80 The Economic Vitality SA Objectives focus on updating policies aimed at enhancing the district’s economic performance and facilitating access to employment opportunities. The Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan Consultation Document introduces new and amended relevant policies relating to making the district an attractive, flexible, and convenient place to work.

Summary of the original conclusions for Economic Vitality in the SA for the adopted Local Plan

7.81 The adopted Local Plan prioritises bolstering the economic vitality of the district through several key policies. These policies aim to support a strong and diverse economy by providing land for businesses, accommodating changing business needs, and retaining local employment opportunities. Settlement hierarchy guidelines ensure that larger settlements, including market towns and larger villages, are equipped to fulfil their distinct economic roles within the district.

7.82 Furthermore, specific policies target the enhancement of town centres to promote economic and community vitality by reinforcing certain land uses and discouraging out-of-centre development. The Plan also allocates strategic employment sites and facilitates the expansion of existing businesses to further support economic growth.

7.83 In addition to supporting economic activity, the adopted Local Plan emphasises sustainable transport use to improve accessibility to employment opportunities. Policies aim to reduce the need for car travel and enhance public transport, walking, and cycling networks. This focus on sustainable transport modes aligns with broader goals of reducing carbon emissions and congestion while improving overall accessibility to economic opportunities throughout the district.

Appraisal of the new / updated policies within the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan (2021-2041)

7.84 The Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan recognises the important role of supporting the local economy by identifying a number of additional locations at employment allocations. Whilst this is discussed in further detail within **Chapter 6** (Commentary on Potential Site Options), these locations are focused within key settlements across the district to support their role and function as economic hubs. Positioning new employment areas close to the district's main settlements will also benefit commuters, as it is likely to result in shorter travel times.

7.85 Policy DE1 Promoting Good Quality Design has been updated to encourage developments to incorporate high-speed digital connectivity. This ensures resilience against evolving technologies and changing work practices as observed in the post-pandemic context and the transition to more hybrid and flexible patterns of employment.

7.86 New and amended policies within the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan has also been amended to require development to improve the district's transport infrastructure (Policies DE1 Promoting Good Quality Design, SB1 Sustainable Building, and New Policy 3 New Community Services and Facilities). By improving the district's transport infrastructure, this will result in greater connectivity across South Kesteven, and may lead to greater accessibility to employment opportunities.

Recommendations and updated appraisal summary

Likely Significant Effect	Effect Dimensions	Recommendations / mitigation	Comparison to Original Appraisal
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.	None proposed.	No change.
Promoting the economic vitality of Grantham, Stamford, Bourne and The Deepings.	Direct, indirect, long-term, permanent, and positive.	None proposed.	No change.

Promoting the vitality and viability of the District's Larger Villages.	Direct, indirect, long-term, permanent, and positive.	None proposed.	No change.
Supporting the District's rural economy.	Direct, indirect, long-term, permanent, and positive.	None proposed.	No change.
Promotion of employment opportunities in the District.	Direct, indirect, long-term, permanent, and positive.	None proposed.	No change.
Diversification of the District's economy.	Direct, indirect, long-term, permanent, and positive.	None proposed.	No change.
Improve internet connectivity to support digital economy and flexible working practices.	Indirect, long-term, permanent, and positive.	None proposed.	Enhanced positive effects.
Improve accessibility to workplaces	Indirect, long-term, permanent, and positive.	None proposed.	Enhanced positive effects.

8. Next steps

- 8.1 This Interim SA Report accompanies the current Regulation 18 consultation on the South Kesteven Local Plan Review (*Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan consultation*, February 2024).
- 8.2 Following the receipt of responses on this Regulation 18 consultation, the updates to the Local Plan will be refined and the Local Plan released by South Kesteven District Council for Regulation 19 consultation with a full SA Report. The SA Report will present the information required by the SEA Regulations.¹⁰
- 8.3 Prior to Regulation 19 consultation, additional reasonable alternatives work will be undertaken through the SA process where appropriate. This will consider the implications of the Local Plan Review for the district's growth strategy. In this respect additional work will focus on understanding the relative sustainability merits of different potential spatial strategies for the Local Plan Review.
- 8.4 Regulation 19 consultation on the pre-submission version of the Local Plan Review is anticipated to take place later in 2024. Once the period for representations on the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan document / SA Report has finished, the main issues raised will be identified and summarised by South Kesteven District Council, which will then consider whether, in light of representations received, the plan can still be deemed 'sound'. If this is the case, the Local Plan Review will be submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination, alongside a statement setting out the main issues raised during the consultation. The Council will also submit the SA Report alongside it. This is anticipated to take place in winter 2024/25.
- 8.5 At Examination, the Inspector will consider representations (alongside the SA Report) before then reporting back. If the Inspector identifies the need for modifications to the Local Plan Review, these will be prepared (and undergo SA) and will then be subject to consultation (with an SA Report Addendum published alongside).
- 8.6 Once found to be 'sound', the Local Plan Review 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 the Plan'.

¹⁰ For Environmental Reports.

