

Sustainability Appraisal and SEA of North Hertfordshire LDF

Appendix 4 Conclusions and Recommendations – LDF Objectives and Options

August 2005

Sustainability Appraisal and SEA of North Hertfordshire LDF

Report on Appraisal of Objectives and Options

A report by **CAG Consultants** for North Hertfordshire District
Council

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Introduction

This appendix contains the conclusions and recommendations from:

- testing of the LDF objectives against the sustainability appraisal objectives
- appraisal the LDF options

The full matrices are contained in appendices 5 (objectives) and 6 (options).

Testing the LDF Objectives

We have divided the LDF objectives into six categories following the testing:

- a. Objective does not conflict with any sustainability appraisal objectives and actively supports some of them. No changes recommended.
- b. Objective does not conflict with any sustainability appraisal objectives, but could better support the objectives with some rephrasing.
- c. Objective both supports and conflicts with some sustainability appraisal objectives. This conflict is difficult to overcome.
- d. Objective both supports and conflicts with some sustainability appraisal objectives. The conflict could be reduced by some revisions to the objective.
- e. Objective not clear, therefore it is difficult to assess impact. It is recommended that the objective is revised to clarify what is intended.
- f. Remove the objective as unclear and adds nothing new.

Below we summarise the conclusions under each heading.

Objective does not conflict with SA objectives

The following objectives were assessed as not conflicting with any sustainability appraisal objectives and actively supporting some of them. No changes are recommended.

- 1.2 Ensure the design of development enhances local character.
- 1.3 Protect the landscape settings and separate identities of settlements.
- 1.5 Protect and enhance the character and quality of the landscape throughout the District, in particular in the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 1.6 Protect important geological sites, wildlife habitats and species, and enhance both the bio-diversity of habitats and species and the linkages between habitats.
- 1.9 Minimise pollution and protect natural systems which filter air impurities and reduce CO₂.
- 1.10 Resist development that may adversely affect the function of floodplains, or result in flooding.
- 1.12 Minimise resource depletion and make the most efficient use of minerals, land, buildings and energy during the construction and use of developments.
- 1.13 Minimise waste production and encourage opportunities for waste recycling.
- 1.14 Retain listed buildings, and where possible other historic buildings of local importance, and maintain or enhance their character and setting.
- 1.15 Preserve or enhance the character and setting of Conservation Areas.
- 1.17 Ensure development enhances the character or its setting by fully considering urban design principles.

- 2.3 Encourage appropriate re-use of derelict or underused land and vacant buildings.
- 4.3 Provide employment opportunities throughout the District at locations which promote the use of public transport, walking and cycling as a means of transport so that it allows people to travel less far to work.
- 6.2 Retain and improve access arrangements to and within town centres by means other than the car.
- 6.3 Promote the location and design of facilities and convenient interchanges between transport modes that allow easy access to all sections of the community.
- 6.4 Develop routes within and between villages and towns for modes of transport other than the car.
- 7.2 Promote the provision of open space, sport, recreation and other leisure facilities within settlements that meet identified needs and minimise the need to travel.
- 7.3 Provide suitable opportunities for small-scale participatory sport and outdoor recreation in rural areas.
- 7.7 Ensure unobtrusive, well-designed and sustainable forms of development for new services, facilities and infrastructure.

No conflict - rephrasing recommended

The following objectives were assessed as not conflicting with any sustainability appraisal objectives, but could better support the objectives or be clearer with some rephrasing.

1.1 Preserve and promote local distinctiveness and diversity.
<p>Conclusions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This objective does not conflict with any SA objectives and actively supports some of them. • Because this objective is grouped within the theme “natural and built environment” we have assumed that it refers to the diversity of landscape, character and biodiversity, as opposed to cultural and ethnic diversity. <p>Recommendations for changes to this objective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rephrase this objective to clarify what is meant by “diversity” and to distinguish it from cultural and ethnic diversity.

1.4 Create multi-purpose "green" links from towns and villages to the countryside to encourage wildlife, enhance local character and local amenity and improve access to recreation.
<p>Conclusions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This objective does not conflict with any SA objectives and actively supports some of them. • It will have a more positive impact on several SA objectives if the green links are designed to maximise access along the green links by pedestrians and cyclists and link popular destinations. <p>Recommendations for changes to this objective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add that the location of green routes of green links will be designed as far as possible to meet the needs of both habitats and pedestrian and cycle

1.4 Create multi-purpose "green" links from towns and villages to the countryside to encourage wildlife, enhance local character and local amenity and improve access to recreation.

movements between popular destinations.

1.18 Promote new development to be physically accessible and safe for all members of the community.

Conclusions

- This objective does not conflict with any SA objectives and actively supports some of them.
- It is not clear if the term "developments" applies to the public realm.

Recommendations for changes to this objective

- Clarify that accessibility and security standards will also apply to the public realm.

3.3 Achieve affordable housing to meet identified local needs in towns and rural areas

Conclusions

- This objective has a positive impact on a number of SA objectives.

Recommendations for changes to this objective

- Add "including the young, the disabled and key workers"

7.4 Locate large-scale leisure facilities within easily accessible but non-residential areas.

Conclusions

- This objective does not conflict with any SA objectives, but could more effectively support several SA objectives if it was clear that "easily accessible" referred to low cost access without a car.

Recommendations for changes to this objective

- Revise the wording of this objective to make facilities "easily accessible by walking and cycling."

7.5 Encourage provision for community facilities within settlements and in new developments.

Conclusions

- This objective does not conflict with any SA objectives and actively supports some of them.

Recommendations for changes to this objective

- The objective would be clearer if it listed the types of community facilities, e.g. health centres, to be encouraged within all settlements.

Some conflict – no change recommended

The following objectives were assessed as both supporting and conflicting with some of the sustainability appraisal objectives. But this conflict is difficult to overcome. No changes are recommended.

3.1 Identify land to meet the Structure Plan dwelling requirement for the period 1991-2011.

3.1 Identify land to meet the Structure Plan dwelling requirement for the period 1991-2011.

Conclusions

- This objective has significant negative impacts on several SA objectives, while contributing to the objective on affordable housing. Some of the negative impacts could be mitigated by policies on location and design of the new housing. Water provision is a significant issue that will not be affected by location.

Recommendations for changes to this objective

- None.

3.2 Maximise the amount of new housing development through regeneration and limit new housing to settlements with adequate service provision and community facilities.

Conclusions

- This objective mitigates some of the negative impacts of 3.1. It has a range of positive impacts on SA objectives, but the provision of new housing in extensions to new settlements will still have negative impacts. Water provision remains a significant issue, though there will be opportunities to include water saving measures within developments.

Recommendations for changes to this objective

- None

6.1 Influence the type and location of development which reduces the need to travel and promotes alternatives modes of transport other than the car.

Conclusions

- This objective supports several SA objectives but could conflict with the aim of promoting rural economic diversification and tourism.

Recommendations for changes to this objective

- We do not recommend any change to this objective, but suggest the employment objectives should promote rural diversification and rural tourism that minimise new traffic generation.

Some or Potential conflict – rephrasing recommended

The following objectives were assessed as both supporting and (potentially) conflicting with some sustainability appraisal objectives. It is recommended that the conflict could be reduced by some revisions to the objective.

1.7 Conserve and enhance the best and most versatile land for agriculture, forestry and horticulture.

Conclusions

- This objective positively protects an important natural resource, but has some possible adverse impacts if protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land constrains the potential for rural economic diversification, locating developments on sites that would minimise journeys by private car, or restricting the development of affordable housing.
- There is uncertainty about the impact of this objective because of: (i) uncertainty about whether the grade 2 agricultural land on the outskirts of Hitchin and Baldock is where new development would be best located to minimise journeys by private car; (ii) a lack of information on how much

1.7 Conserve and enhance the best and most versatile land for agriculture, forestry and horticulture.

agricultural land in the District is grade 3a as opposed to grade 3b.

Recommendations for changes to this objective

- This objective may need to be revised if there is a conflict between protecting the best agricultural land, minimising trip generation, and providing affordable housing.
- Clarify whether grade 3a agricultural land will be given the same protection as grade 2 land.

1.11 Protect ground and surface water from over-abstraction and maximise infiltration and the natural re-charge of groundwater resources through appropriate development proposals.

Conclusions

- This objective supports several SA objectives, but may restrain some employment generating and affordable housing developments. However, long-term sustainable prosperity and decent housing may be best served by restricting such developments to those that are not large water users.

Recommendations for changes to this objective

- This objective would be clearer if the meaning of the term “appropriate development proposals” was explained. For example, does this imply minimum standards for water efficiency, and would certain high water using developments be excluded from locating in North Hertfordshire?

1.16 Protect or enhance Historic Parks and Gardens and their settings.

Conclusions

- This objective support several SA objectives but could conflict with the SA objective of sharing the benefits of prosperity fairly, since not all residents will have equal access to historic parks and gardens.

Recommendations for changes to this objective

- Widen this objective (or have another objective) to protect and enhance parks that are valued and actively used by the community.

2.1 Prevent settlements from merging, and rural areas from losing their character, particularly in the Green Belt, which should be protected from all forms of inappropriate development.

Conclusions

- This objective could conflict with rural diversification, minimising traffic generation and providing access to affordable housing.

Recommendations for changes to this objective

- Reword in a more positive way, such as to allow rural diversification and affordable housing that does not damage character.
- Clarify what is meant by “inappropriate development.”

3.4 Promote new housing at sustainable locations at appropriate densities and with a suitable mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures

Conclusions

- This objective mitigates some of the negative impacts of 3.1. It has a range of positive impacts on SA objectives, but the provision of new housing in any location will still have negative impacts. Water provision remains a significant issue.

Recommendations for changes to this objective

- Clarify what is meant by sustainable locations for example by adding “that

3.4 Promote new housing at sustainable locations at appropriate densities and with a suitable mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures
reduce the need to travel by car."

4.1 Provide sufficient employment land to meet the District's employment needs taking into account changing employment and work practices and environmental considerations.

Conclusions

- The impacts of this objective mainly depend on the location of new developments.
- How well it contributes to the SA economy objective depends on whether it can improve the quality of local jobs

Recommendations for changes to this objective

- Add "and the need to attract high quality employment provision".

4.2 Recognise and make provision for the growing importance of tourism and leisure to local economies, particularly in rural areas.

Conclusions

- This objective aims to support the rural economy, but does not promote sustainable tourism. Its impact on most SA objectives would depend on the location of individual tourism developments, and how sustainable the rural tourism is able to be.

Recommendations for changes to this objective

- Add "and promote sustainable tourism".

5.1 Promote appropriate development in town centres and protect and enhance the character, vitality and viability of existing town centres and local centres.

Conclusions

- This objective could conflict with reducing the use of motor vehicles, protecting greenfield land and promoting sustainable urban living.

Recommendations for changes to this objective

- The objective is revised to promote a hierarchy of centres with different scales and range of facilities, depending on size.

7.1 Protect and conserve open spaces within and adjoining settlements for recreation use, visual and wildlife significance.

Conclusions

- Although this objective supports several SA objectives it could conflict with the objective to deliver more sustainable location patterns.

Recommendations for changes to this objective

- Include a caveat allowing development of open spaces adjoining developments with sufficient open space provision if the location would support reduced car use.

7.6 Maximise accessibility to facilities and services for local communities.

Conclusions

- This objective may conflict with the SA objective to promote sustainable urban living.
- It could more effectively support several SA objectives if it was clear that "easily accessible" referred to access without a car.

Recommendations for changes to this objective

- Revise the wording to specify "accessibility without a car."

7.6 Maximise accessibility to facilities and services for local communities.

- Specify the type and scale of facilities that would be appropriate for local communities so as to avoid a conflict with the viability and vitality of town centres.

Unclear objective

The following objective was considered unclear, and therefore it is difficult to assess its impact. It is recommended that the objective is revised to clarify what is intended.

1.8 Minimise the environmental impact of any major development on the surrounding countryside and secure environmental benefits locally.

Conclusions

- It is difficult to be certain about the impact of this objective because it is not clear what types of environmental benefits will be secured and if there will be a limit placed on the value of environmental benefits to be secured.

Recommendations for changes to this objective

- Clarify the type of environmental benefits that will be secured and that environmental benefits will only be secured where this is not detrimental to the provision of affordable housing.

Remove objective

The following objective was considered unclear and appeared to add nothing new to the other objectives. It is recommended that it is removed.

2.2 Ensure a sustainable pattern of development, providing a balance between the needs of housing and other land-uses, whilst protecting natural assets.

Conclusions

- This objective is very general and it is not clear how both “balancing need” and “protecting natural assets” would be reflected in plan policies.

Recommendations for changes to this objective

- Remove this objective as other objectives are clearer about what the plan is aiming to achieve.

Options Appraisal

Below we summarise the conclusions and recommendations from testing the alternative options. These are grouped under the seven themes and the issues outlined in the options paper. The full matrices are available in appendix 6.

In some cases, in order to undertake the appraisal, we have made assumptions about what the option might entail. Our assumptions are explained immediately below the description of the option.

Natural and Built Environment

1.1 Protecting Landscapes

Option (a) Include policies protecting landscapes based on their amenity and recreational value and national designations (such as AONB).

Conclusions

- This option impacts on a number of key sustainability issues: promoting rural tourism; providing additional affordable housing; high reliance on car transport; pockets of deprivation; and pressure on the quality of landscapes from development.
- However, it is impossible to comment on the impact of this option on the all but rural tourism, for which it is assumed to be positive. The uncertainty about the impact arises from the absence of information on the location of landscapes that are recognised as having high amenity and recreational value.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- The option is developed further to include criteria for how landscapes of high amenity and recreational value will be identified, and a list of areas which will have different levels of protection. The criteria for identifying the sites should include being easily accessible for those without a car, especially from the most deprived areas of Letchworth and Hitchin. It should also take account of the findings of the Landscape Character Assessment.

Option (b) Include policies protecting landscapes based on their value for agriculture and forestry.

NB. It is not clear if this option would protect landscapes of *high* agricultural and forestry value from agricultural practices that would damage landscapes, or protect landscapes of *low* agricultural and forestry value from change, while allowing significant landscape change (such as tree planting) on those of high agricultural and forestry value. For the appraisal below we have assumed the former.

Conclusions

- This option is ambiguous. It is not clear if it would protect landscapes of *high* agricultural and forestry value from agricultural practices that would damage

landscapes, or protect landscapes of *low* agricultural and forestry value from change, while allowing significant landscape change (such as tree planting or new developments) on landscapes of high agricultural and forestry value. For the appraisal above we have assumed the latter.

- This option impacts on a number of key sustainability issues: promoting rural tourism; providing additional affordable housing; high reliance on car transport; pockets of deprivation; and pressure on the quality of landscapes from development.
- However, it is impossible to comment on the impact of this option because of the absence of information on the location and use of landscapes that are recognised as having high agricultural and forestry value.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- The ambiguity in this option is removed.
- The option is developed further to include a list of areas with high agricultural and forestry value, and how this overlaps with the Chiltern AONB and other landscapes of high amenity and recreational value.
- The option includes the active encouragement of new tourism, recreation and leisure pursuits on agricultural and forestry sites.

Option (c) Include policies protecting landscapes based on their amenity and recreational value and national designations (such as AONB) *and* their value for agriculture and forestry.

NB. It is not clear if this option would protect landscapes of *high* agricultural and forestry value from agricultural practices that would damage landscapes, or protect landscapes of *low* agricultural and forestry value from change, while allowing significant landscape change (such as tree planting) on those of high agricultural and forestry value. For the appraisal below we have assumed the former.

Note: This option reflects the approach taken in the current plan, i.e. it is the "business as usual" option

Conclusions

- This option is ambiguous. It is not clear if it would protect landscapes of *high* agricultural and forestry value from agricultural practices that would damage landscapes, or protect landscapes of *low* agricultural and forestry value from change, while allowing significant landscape change (such as tree planting or new developments) on landscapes of high agricultural and forestry value. For the appraisal above we have assumed the latter.
- This option impacts on a number of key sustainability issues: promoting rural tourism; providing additional affordable housing; high reliance on car transport; pockets of deprivation; and pressure on the quality of landscapes from development.
- However, it is impossible to comment on the impact of this option because of the absence of information on the location and use of landscapes that are recognised as having high amenity, recreational, agricultural and forestry value.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- The ambiguity in this option is removed, as for option 1(b).
- The option is developed further to include a list of areas with high amenity, recreational, agricultural and forestry value, and how these overlap.

- The option includes the active encouragement of new tourism, recreation and leisure pursuits on agricultural and forestry sites.

Option (d) Not to include a policy on landscape protection and therefore rely on the latest Government advice.

NB. We have assumed for this option that the absence of a policy would weaken the protection of landscapes, regardless of government advice.

Conclusions

- We have assumed for this option that the absence of a policy would weaken the protection of landscapes, regardless of government advice.
- This option would have an adverse impact on the key sustainability issues of: promoting rural tourism; pressure on greenfield sites and the quality of landscapes from development.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- None.

1.2 Protecting biodiversity

Option (a) Include a policy requiring all new developments to protect or enhance biodiversity.

Note: This option reflects the approach taken in the current plan, i.e. it is the “business as usual” option

Conclusions

- This option is ambiguous as it gives no indication of the levels of protection that should be afforded to different types of sites, nor what kind of enhancement would be promoted. For this appraisal we have therefore assumed that any development that damaged biodiversity, however low level the biodiversity on the proposed site, would be prohibited.
- Although this option would protect existing biodiversity, it is not clear that the enhancement aspect would redress biogenetic isolation within and around ‘High Biodiversity Areas’ as advocated in the North Herts BAP.
- This option would have an adverse impact on the key sustainability issues of meeting the need for affordable housing, and could also have a detrimental impact on economic development and the provision of services and facilities in the district.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- This option is developed into options that set out; (i) the alternative levels of protection that might be afforded to the habitats and urban biodiversity sites presented in the BAP; (ii) alternative locations for the development of green corridors; (iii) other enhancement features that would be encouraged.

Option (b) Include a policy encouraging additional wildlife features, such as green corridors linking open spaces within urban areas to each other and the countryside.

Conclusions

- This option could have a severe adverse impact on existing biodiversity in the district

as it affords no protection to areas that are important for biodiversity. It is also not clear that the location of green corridors would redress biogenetic isolation within and around 'High Biodiversity Areas' as outlined in the BAP.

- This option could better support access and recreation if these were promoted within green corridors.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- This option is incorporated as one of the enhancement features within option 1.2(a), and revised to specify that the location of green corridors should aim to redress biogenetic isolation within and around 'High Biodiversity Areas' as identified in the BAP.
- A proposal to enhance pedestrian and cyclist access to green corridors is incorporated into option 1.2(a).

Option (c) Include a policy requiring all new developments to protect or enhance biodiversity *and* encouraging additional wildlife features, such as green corridors linking open spaces within urban areas to each other and the countryside.

Conclusions

- This option is ambiguous as it gives no indication of the levels of protection that should be afforded to different types of sites, nor what kind of enhancement would be promoted. For this appraisal we have therefore assumed that any development that damaged biodiversity, however low level the biodiversity on the proposed site, would be prohibited.
- Although this option would protect existing biodiversity, it is not clear that the green corridors would redress biogenetic isolation within and around 'High Biodiversity Areas' as advocated in the North Herts BAP.
- This option would have an adverse impact on the key sustainability issues of meeting the need for affordable housing, and could also have a detrimental impact on economic development and the provision of services and facilities in the district.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- This option and option 1(a) is developed into options that set out; (i) the alternative levels of protection that might be afforded to the habitats and urban biodiversity sites presented in the BAP; (ii) alternative locations for the development of green corridors; (iii) other enhancement features that would be encouraged.

Option (d) Not to include a policy on biodiversity and therefore rely on the latest Government advice.

NB. We have assumed for this option that the absence of a policy would weaken the protection of landscapes, regardless of government advice.

Conclusions

- We have assumed for this option that the absence of a policy would weaken the protection of biodiversity, regardless of government advice.
- This option would have an adverse impact on the key sustainability issues of protecting biodiversity that is already under pressure from loss and fragmentation.

Recommendations for changes to this option

None.

1.3 Minimising pollution

Option (a) Consider how to deal with problems of air quality, perhaps through the

encouragement of mixed-use development as a means of reducing the need to travel thereby decreasing air pollution.

Conclusions

- The major air pollutant in North Hertfordshire is ozone which derives from traffic emissions, although air pollution is not considered a key sustainability issue for Hertfordshire.
- Traffic related air pollution needs to be tackled by a range of transport and location measures, for which mixed use developments is only one.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- None

Option (b) Seek to reduce the impact of noisy land uses or activities

Note: This option reflects the approach taken in the current plan, i.e. it is the "business as usual" option

Conclusions

- This option would make an important contribution to reducing ambient noise in the towns and maintaining tranquillity in the countryside. This will also contribute to the aim of improving conditions that engender good health.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- None

Option (c) Apply different standards for controlling noise and light pollution in urban and rural areas

Conclusions

- It is assumed that the different standards would recognise the need to protect areas of tranquillity in the countryside and sensitive areas (homes, schools and recreation areas in the town). If this is the case, this option would make an important contribution to reducing ambient noise and light pollution in towns and maintaining tranquillity and natural darkness in the countryside.
- The impact on town centres depends whether the standards recognise the importance of promoting liveability in town centres

Recommendations for changes to this option

- Clarify that the different standards would recognise the need to protect areas of tranquillity in the countryside, sensitive areas in the towns, and promote liveability in town centres.

Option (d) Aim to protect watercourses and groundwater sources from pollution.

Conclusions

- This option should help protect watercourses and groundwater supplies and have a positive impact on biodiversity. The review of key sustainability issues notes that the quality of surface and groundwater is threatened by the water supply needs and drainage from future developments. The District is on a major chalk aquifer with high groundwater vulnerability. Planned housing developments will put significant pressure on ground and surface water (see appraisal of issue 3.1) so it is essential adequate protection is put in place. Therefore the wording of this option needs to be stronger

Recommendations for changes to this option

- Re-word to say “Ensure adequate protection....., including from the impacts of new housing developments”.

Option (e) Maintain and enhance the ecological and recreational value of water habitats and protect them from damage through development and change.

Conclusions

- This option will help protect watercourses and groundwater supplies, have a positive impact on biodiversity, improve the District’s ability to respond to climate change, and improve access to green spaces. The BAP notes the value of wetland habitats, especially those of headland areas, which have an important impact on the hydrology of the area. The headland areas, as outlined in the BAP include areas which could be the location of future housing developments. The BAP quotes the recommendations from Vision 1998, which says that “development adjacent to or directly impacting on river corridors or key wetlands should be minimised”. However, it also notes the need to “acquire comprehensive data relating to hydrology and wetland habitats, especially those of headwaters and their wider implications”. This implies that this option will only prevent damaging development if enough data is available to understand the impacts of development.

Recommendations for changes to this option and need for additional data

- Add “ and ensure that appropriate data is available to understand the impacts of proposed development on hydrology and wetland habitats”.
- Implement the Action 17 in the BAP: “acquire comprehensive data relating to hydrology and wetland habitats, especially those of headwaters and their wider implications”.

Option (f) Encourage alternative forms of drainage such as soakaways and filter strips which increase infiltration and natural recharge of groundwater resources

Conclusions

- This option will help protect watercourses and groundwater supplies, have a positive impact on biodiversity, and improve the District’s ability to respond to climate change. The District is on a major chalk aquifer with high groundwater vulnerability. Planned housing developments will put significant pressure on ground and surface water (see appraisal of issue 3.1 as well as the appraisal of the RSS, particularly of the plans for the Stevenage sub-area) so it is essential adequate protection is put in place. This option will reduce pollution of watercourses and groundwater , but it needs to be stronger.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- Instead of “encourage” reword to say “ and require for all developments over x size as part of a sustainable water resource management scheme”.

Option(g) Prohibit development in natural floodplains and in locations where development would increase flood risk in areas downstream because of additional surface run-off, unless appropriate attenuation measures are put in place

Conclusions

This option will improve the District’s ability to adapt to climate change, protect biodiversity and protect river water and groundwater. However, the qualification “unless appropriate attenuation measures are put in place” is a concern, as it has the potential to allow development on floodplains. Further investigation is needed to understand the full impacts of attenuation measures for building on floodplains.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- Reword to say “attenuation measures which can be demonstrated to be effective and avoid impacts on biodiversity and groundwater and river water quality”.

1.4 Energy generation

Option (a) include policies which *only* encourage small-scale renewable energy schemes to be incorporated into new developments.

NB. We have added the word “only” to more clearly distinguish this option from option (b).

Conclusions

- This option would have a positive impact on the key sustainability issue of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, although this beneficial impact would be decreased by excluding large scale renewable developments. Information is not available on the extent to which small scale as opposed to large scale renewable technologies could meet North Hertfordshire’s energy needs.
- This option could have an adverse impact on the key sustainability issues of pressure on landscapes in the district. Although this would only be true of some small scale renewable technologies, and only if inappropriately sited.

Recommendations for changes to this option and new data needed

- Include the caveat that externally visible small scale renewable technologies such as PVCs are located so as to harmonise with the surrounding landscape and character.
- Review this option once information is available from the Hertfordshire Renewable Energy Study on the potential generating capacity of small scale renewable technologies in the district, as opposed to large scale technologies.

Option (b) include policies which *only* encourage large scale renewable energy schemes such as wind farms

NB. We have added the word “only” to more clearly distinguish this option from option (a).

Conclusions

- This option would have a positive impact on the key sustainability issue of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, although this beneficial impact would be decreased by excluding small scale renewable developments. Information is not available on the extent to which small scale as opposed to large scale renewable technologies could meet North Hertfordshire’s energy needs.
- It would also support the key sustainability issue of promoting rural economic diversification.
- This option could have an adverse impact on the key sustainability issues of pressure on biodiversity and landscapes in the district. But it is not possible to be accurate about the impact until the conclusions from the Hertfordshire Renewable Energy Study are available. This should provide more information on the most suitable renewable technologies for the district and their locations.

Recommendations for changes to this option and new data needed

- Develop more detailed alternative options for suitable renewable technologies and their locations in the district once the conclusions from the Hertfordshire Renewable

Energy Study are available.

Option (c) include policies which encourage small-scale renewable energy schemes to be incorporated into new developments *and* encourage large scale renewable energy schemes such as wind farms.

Conclusions

- This option would maximise the potential for renewable technologies to contribute to the key sustainability issue reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- It would also support the key sustainability issue of promoting rural economic diversification.
- This option could have an adverse impact on the key sustainability issues of pressure on biodiversity and landscapes in the district. But it is not possible to be accurate about the impact until the conclusions from the Hertfordshire Renewable Energy Study are available. This should provide more information on the most suitable renewable technologies and locations for the district.

Recommendations for changes to this option and new data needed

- Include the caveat that externally visible small scale renewable technologies such as PVCs are located so as to harmonise with the surrounding landscape and character.
- Develop more detailed alternative options for suitable renewable technologies and their locations in the district once the conclusions from the Hertfordshire Renewable Energy Study are available.

Option (d) Do not include a policy on renewable energy.

Note: This option reflects the approach taken in the current plan, i.e. it is the "business as usual" option.

Conclusions

- This option would have a negative impact on the key sustainability issue reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- It could also decrease opportunities for economic diversification. This is especially true in rural areas where some large scale renewable energy schemes may be located, or where feed stocks such as bio-mass and agricultural wastes could be generated.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- None.

1.5 Waste Management

Option (a) Require new housing and commercial properties to make provision for wheelie bin storage and recycling bins/containers

Conclusions

- This option will have a positive affect on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and facilitating recycling and composting of waste.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- None.

Option (b) Identify sites for bring recycling centres

Conclusions

- This option will promote recycling and should reduce greenhouse gas emissions,

though bring sites can encourage unnecessary journeys.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- None.

Option (c) Where new waste facilities are required, protect the surrounding area from adverse environmental impacts arising from the handling, processing, transport and disposal of waste

Conclusions

- This option requires protection of the local environment, which it is assumed would include biodiversity, landscape, the historic environment and reducing noise, dust, air and water pollution. Therefore, the impact is positive compared to not having this option. However, any new facility is likely to have some impact on these elements.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- None.

Option (d) Encourage the use of renewable resources and the re-use of building materials in new developments

Conclusions

- This option will help reduce the demand for raw materials, and the impacts of their transport and production on biodiversity, air pollution and greenhouse gas emission. It will also promote the reuse of building materials and the recycling of aggregates. It is understood that this option appears in a section on waste. However, there is no overall option on sustainable design, and the impact would be stronger if the option was expanded to encourage sustainable design, use of sustainable building materials and minimisation of waste in construction. Sustainable design also covers water efficiency and reuse, design for energy efficiency, renewable energy and use of sustainable materials.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- Expand the option to cover sustainable design, the use of sustainable building materials, and minimisation of waste in construction.

Option (f) No formal policy on waste and recycling

Note: this is an additional option, reflecting current practice, added to the options included within the Options report. The SEA Directive requires that current practice ("business as usual") be appraised.

In the appraisal of this option, we have assumed that having no formal policy would therefore in result in no actions to promote recycling and reuse of materials.

It should be noted also that there is no option (e) to appraise, as option (e) is simply "other" in the options report.

Conclusions

- This option misses the opportunity to promote recycling and reuse and reduce the environmental impacts of the production and distribution of raw materials.
- It also misses the opportunity to promote sustainable design and the reuse of building materials.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- None

1.6 Local character

Option (a) Include a general policy requiring development to preserve or enhance local character and open space pattern, but do not complete an Urban Character Study.

Conclusions

- This option will help protect landscape character and the historic environment, which are elements of local character. However, an Urban Character Study would ensure a more comprehensive and rigorous approach.
- This option will also contribute to a sense of local identity, and the liveability of town centres.
- It will help promote the use of local building materials, and the reuse of building materials.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- None

Option (b) Complete an Urban Character Study and include a policy requiring new development to respect the detailed local character guidance contained within it.

Conclusions

- This option will help protect landscape character and the historic environment, which are elements of local character. The production of an Urban Character Study would ensure a more comprehensive and rigorous approach, and prevent the gradual cumulative loss of character.
- This option will also contribute to a sense of local identity, and the liveability of town centres.
- It will help promote the use of local building materials, and the reuse of building materials.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- None

Option (c) Do not include a policy on urban character and therefore rely on the latest Government advice.

Note: This option reflects the approach taken in the current plan, i.e. it is the "business as usual" option

Conclusions

- This option has a negative impact on a number of objectives by missing the opportunity to help protect landscape character and the historic environment, which are elements of local character.
- This option also misses the opportunity to contribute to a sense of local identity, and the liveability of town centres.
- It also misses the opportunity to promote the use of local building materials, and the reuse of building materials.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- None

1.7 Density of development

Option (a) Include a policy that high density developments (i.e. over 50 dwellings per hectare) will only be allowed in close proximity to town centres or railway stations.

Conclusions

- This option would have an adverse impact on the key sustainability issues of minimising development on greenfield land and protecting landscapes.
- It may also have an adverse impact on two other key sustainability issues, by reducing the opportunities to develop affordable housing and missing opportunities to locate developments in ways that minimise car journeys.
- The option could also have an adverse impact on the historic character of urban areas, but is likely to promote sustainable urban living.
- It may have an adverse impact on biodiversity, but this would depend on whether (a) housing that is not located in urban areas is sited on greenfield land with high or low biodiversity; (b) urban sites with high biodiversity interest are selected for development.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- Expand this option to allow high density housing in any areas that do, or could potentially have good public transport links, but excluding those that have important biodiversity landscape or value – currently or as a potential green link between high biodiversity sites.

Option (b) Include a policy that high density developments will only be allowed where there is no harm to the local character.

Conclusions

- This option would have an adverse impact on the key sustainability issues of minimising development on greenfield land and protecting landscapes.
- It may also have an adverse impact on two other key sustainability issues, by reducing the opportunities to develop affordable housing and missing opportunities to locate developments in ways that minimise car journeys.
- It may have an adverse impact on biodiversity, but this would depend on whether (a) housing that is not located in urban areas is sited on greenfield land with high or low biodiversity; (b) urban sites with high biodiversity interest are selected for development.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- None.

Option (c) Do not include a specific policy on density.

Note: This option reflects the approach taken in the current plan, i.e. it is the "business as usual" option.

Conclusions

- This option is likely to result in lower densities than if a policy on density is included. It does not have any positive sustainability impacts and has several adverse impacts.
- It would have an adverse impact on the key sustainability issues of minimising development on greenfield land, protecting landscapes and reducing car use and greenhouse gas emissions.
- It may also have an adverse impact on biodiversity, the historic environment and traffic related pollution.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- As this option has no positive sustainability impacts, remove the option, and replace it with options for alternative minimum or average density levels.

1.8 Historic environment

Option (a) Ensure that developers carry out investigation and evaluation of archaeological sites if it is established there is a potential interest
Note: This option reflects the approach taken in the current plan, i.e. it is a "business as usual" option

Conclusions

- This option should help protect the historic environment, though for clarity it should state that following the evaluation there should be preservation or excavation and recording. It could also protect landscape character.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- Clarify that following evaluation there should be preservation or excavation and recording

Option (b) Make sure that development does not adversely affect or lead to the loss of important areas and features of the historic landscape.

Note: This option also reflects the approach taken in the current plan, i.e. it is a "business as usual" option

Conclusions

- This option will help protect historic landscape character and the historic environment, which are elements of local character.
- This option will also contribute to a sense of local identity.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- None

Option (c) Ensure that developments related to Listed Buildings are not detrimental to their setting and that materials are sympathetic to those used in the original dwelling

Note: This option also reflects the approach taken in the current plan, i.e. it is a "business as usual" option

Conclusions

- This option will help protect the historic environment, and thus contribute to a sense of local identity, and liveability in town centres.
- It could potentially make it more difficult to improve the energy efficiency of properties and access renewable energy, for example through photovoltaic cells

Recommendations for changes to this option

- Allow sympathetic improvements to energy efficiency and renewable energy provision.

Option (d) Make sure that any development proposals respect or enhance the special character or appearance of Conservation Areas, especially in terms of scale, mass, height or materials.

Note: This option also reflects the approach taken in the current plan, i.e. it is a "business as usual" option

Conclusions

- This option will help protect the historic environment, and thus contribute to a sense of local identity, and liveability in town centres.
- It could potentially make it more difficult to improve the energy efficiency of

properties and access renewable energy, for example through photovoltaic cells

Recommendations for changes to this option

- Allow sympathetic improvements to energy efficiency and renewable energy provision.

2. Rural areas and settlement pattern

2.1 How to identify which villages within the rural area might be able to accommodate development

Option (a) Identify villages which may take further development based on the level of facilities in the village.

Conclusions

- This option would have a positive impact on the key sustainability issues of minimising development on greenfield land and protecting landscapes.
- It would have an adverse impact in terms of generating more and longer car journeys and therefore add to greenhouse gas emissions. This would work against the North Herts targets to: reduce the distance travelled per person by 5% by 2021; reduce the car use modal share from 72.07% to 65.5% by 2021.
- But there is uncertainty about the extent to which this option would generate new journeys. This would require more information on: the type of facilities that would be considered; the proposed levels of development and in which villages; and modelling to predict the likely journey generation.
- It is likely that this option would prevent the development of affordable housing in some villages where there is a demand for more affordable housing, but to be certain this would require further analysis of the Housing Needs data.

Recommendations for changes to this option and new data needs

- Clarify what types of facilities would be considered and therefore which villages would be expected to accommodate development. The choice of facilities should include public transport links and other facilities which studies have shown generate longer and the most frequent journeys.
- Clarify if certain types of development, e.g. tourism, affordable housing, or housing to meet local needs, would be favoured in the villages.
- Based on the above information model the likely impact on journeys and modal share.
- Use the Housing Needs study database to analyse which (if any) villages with a significant demand for more affordable housing would be prevented from accommodating more affordable housing under this option.

Option (b) Identify villages which may take further development based on the population of the village.

Conclusions

- This option would have a very similar impact to option (a) if there is a significant correlation between villages with larger populations and villages with more services

and facilities.

- If there are a number of villages with higher populations but relatively poor access to services and facilities, then this option is likely to have a more severe impact on the key sustainability issue of trip generation than option (a). However, if the villages with higher populations are also those with better public transport links, then this option could have a less severe impact on trip generation than option (a).
- It is likely that this option would prevent the development of affordable housing in some villages where there is a demand for more affordable housing, but to be certain this would require further analysis of the Housing Needs data.

Recommendations for changes to this option and new data needed

- Clarify which villages, on the basis of population size would be expected to accommodate development and how much housing they could accommodate without damaging character. (This information could probably be derived from the Housing Capacity Study.)
- Investigate the availability of facilities and public transport links in these villages.
- Clarify if certain types of development, e.g. tourism, affordable housing, or housing to meet local needs, would be favoured in the villages.
- Based on the above information model the likely impact on journeys and modal share.
- Use the Housing Needs study database to analyse which (if any) villages with a significant demand for more affordable housing would be prevented from accommodating more affordable housing under this option.

Option (c) Identify villages which may take further development based on the desires of the parish council and the residents of the village.

Note: This option reflects the approach taken in the current plan, i.e. it is the “business as usual” option.

Conclusions

- It is very difficult to predict the impact of this option because it would depend on the decisions of parish councils and residents. There is no guarantee that their decisions would be based on the need for housing, rural diversification, services or facilities.
- This option could have an adverse impact on the objective of “sharing access to services and the benefits of prosperity fairly” if the parish council and residents did not consider the needs of the more deprived members of their community.

Recommendations for changes to this option and new data needed

- Include an explanation of how parish councils and residents would be expected to reach decisions, e.g. if their decisions should be backed up by evidence of need, availability of facilities, and how they would involve and consider the needs of the more deprived members of their community, as well as the needs to protect biodiversity and local character.

Option (d) Do not identify specific villages and allow some development in all villages.

Conclusions

- This option would have a positive impact on the key sustainability issues of minimising development on greenfield land and protecting landscapes. The extent of this impact would depend on the amount of development allowed in the villages.
- It would have an adverse impact in terms of generating more and longer car

journeys and therefore add to greenhouse gas emissions, especially as this option would allow development in villages with poor public transport and facilities. This would work against the North Herts targets to: reduce the distance travelled per person by 5% by 2021; reduce the car use modal share from 72.07% to 65.5% by 2021.

- It could also increase the number of households with poor access to services and facilities.
- It is not clear if this option would support the key sustainability issues of providing more affordable housing. This would depend on the kind of development that was permitted or encouraged under this option.
- There is uncertainty about how much this option would generate new journeys. This would require more information on: the amount of development allowed in each village; modelling to predict the likely journey generation.

Recommendations for changes to this option and new data needed

- Clarify how much new development would be allowed in each village under this option, and what proportion of the development would be for affordable housing.
- Based on the above information model the likely impact on village character, journeys and modal share.

Option (e) Do not allow any development in any village.

Conclusions

- This option is likely to have a very negative impact on the key sustainability issues of promoting rural tourism, protecting greenfield land and landscapes, providing affordable housing, and improving access to facilities in rural areas, including health and educational facilities.
- It would have a positive impact on the key sustainability issues of minimising new trip generation and greenhouse gas emissions.
- It may also have a negative impact on community cohesion.

Recommendations for changes to this option and new data needs

- This option is adapted to allow the development of small scale community services, facilities and meeting places, including schools and health facilities, designed to serve the needs of existing village residents only.

2.2 Whether to distinguish between levels of development appropriate at different villages

Option (a) Treat all identified villages the same.

NB. We have assumed that this option would allow some development in all villages. This option reflects the approach taken in the current plan, i.e. it is the "business as usual" option.

Conclusions

- We have assumed that this option would allow some development in all villages, but it is very difficult to predict the size of the impact of this option without knowing what type and level of development would be allowed in villages.
- This option would have a positive impact on the key sustainability issues of minimising development on greenfield land and protecting landscapes. The extent of this impact would depend on the amount of development allowed in the villages.
- Assuming that this option would allow development in all villages, then it will have an adverse impact on the key sustainability issues of increasing car journeys and reducing greenhouse emissions.

- This option would support the objective of sharing the benefits of prosperity fairly *between villages* because it would allow all villages equal opportunities to achieve the same level of economic growth, facilities improvement and housing.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- Clarify the type and level of development that would be allowed in villages.

Option (b) Identify some villages for infilling development only.

NB. We have assumed for this option that edge of village development on greenfield sites would be allowed for other villages.

Conclusions

- We have assumed that this option would allow some development in all villages, including edge of village development for villages that are not restricted to infill. But it is very difficult to predict the size of the impact of this option without knowing what type and level of development would be allowed in villages, and the criteria to be used for selecting villages for infill only.
- This option would have a positive impact on the key sustainability issues of minimising development on greenfield land and protecting landscapes. The extent of this impact would depend on the amount of development allowed in the villages and the criteria to be used for selecting villages for infill only.
- Assuming that this option would allow development in all villages, then it will have an adverse impact on the key sustainability issues of increasing car journeys and reducing greenhouse emissions.
- This option may have an adverse impact on the objectives of sharing the benefits of prosperity fairly *between villages*, access to affordable housing and services, because it would not allow all villages equal opportunities to achieve the same level of economic growth, facilities improvement and housing.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- Clarify the type and level of development that would be allowed in villages.
- Clarify the criteria that would be used to select villages for infill development only.

2.3 Development in the rural areas outside the villages

Option (a) Treat the whole rural area the same, regardless of whether it is designated green belt.

NB. We have assumed that this option would only allow small scale appropriate development in all rural areas.

Conclusions

- We have assumed that this option would allow small scale appropriate development in all rural areas.
- This option would have a positive impact on the key sustainability issues of protecting landscapes.
- It may restrict opportunities for rural diversification and tourism development, although protecting the countryside character can also support tourism.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- None.

Option (b) Afford the green belt greater protection than the remainder of the rural area.

NB. We have assumed that this option would only allow small scale appropriate development in the green belt, but would allow some more intrusive developments in other parts of the district. This option reflects the approach taken in the current plan, i.e. it is the "business as usual" option.

Conclusions

- We have assumed that this option would only allow small scale appropriate development in the green belt, but would allow some more intrusive developments in other parts of the district.
- This option would have a negative impact on the key sustainability issues of protecting landscapes, biodiversity, and could also result in more pressure to develop high grade agricultural land.
- It may enhance opportunities for rural diversification and tourism development outside of the green belt, although protecting the countryside character can also support tourism.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- Clarify if the same policies would apply to the Chiterns AONB and areas of high biodiversity as to other rural areas outside of the green belt.

2.4 Replacement buildings in the countryside

Option (a) Limit replacement buildings to no greater volume, height and floorspace than the building to be replaced.

Conclusions

- This option could have an adverse impact on the significant sustainability issue of rural economic diversification, both because of the constraints on replacement buildings and the lack of protection to historic character of the countryside, which could have an adverse impact on rural tourism.
- Although it would help to limit the development of more intrusive buildings in the countryside, there is no guarantee that the replacement buildings would be in harmony with the historic character of the area.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- None.

Option (b) Allow replacement up to a specified percentage increase in floorspace.

Conclusions

- This option would have an uncertain impact on the significant sustainability issue of rural economic diversification. It would allow the flexibility of the development of replacement buildings for new uses, but on the other hand the lack of protection to historic character of the countryside could have an adverse impact on rural tourism.
- It could also have an adverse impact on the significant sustainability issue of pressure on landscape, as well as historic character, as there is no guarantee that the replacement buildings would be in harmony with the historic character of the area.
- By allowing an increase in employment or residents in the countryside it is likely to result in increased car use.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- None.

Option (c) Allow replacement providing the new building would not have a materially greater impact than the old (each site to be judged on its individual circumstances).
NB. This option reflects the approach taken in the current plan, i.e. it is the “business as usual” option.

Conclusions

- This option would have an uncertain impact on the significant sustainability issue of rural economic diversification. It may restrict opportunities for new developments that support rural diversification. But by protecting the appearance of the countryside it could have a positive impact on rural tourism.
- It would have a positive impact on the significant sustainability issue of pressure on landscape, but there is no guarantee that the replacement buildings would be in harmony with the historic character of the area.
- By possibly allowing an increase in employment or residents in the countryside it may result in increased car use.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- None.

Option (d) Only allow redevelopment where original building is beyond economic repair.

Conclusions

- This option would have an uncertain impact on the significant sustainability issue of rural economic diversification. It may restrict opportunities for new developments that support rural diversification. But by protecting historic buildings it could have a positive impact on rural tourism, although it may also compel the retention of poor quality buildings.
- It may have an adverse impact on the significant sustainability issue of pressure on landscape, by requiring the retention of poor quality buildings that are out of harmony with the landscape, although it would also help to retain historic buildings.
- By possibly allowing an increase in employment or residents in the countryside it may result in increased car use.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- Extend this option to allow redevelopment of a similar size and floorspace where the existing building has low architectural or historic character.

3. Housing

3.1 Location for the required new housing

Option (a) Continue current policy of focusing development on the four towns and fourteen villages, which may include limited development of greenfield sites.

NB. This option reflects the approach taken in the current plan, i.e. it is the "business as usual" option

Conclusions

- This option will still involve significant development on greenfield sites. This in turn is likely to have significant impacts on biodiversity and landscape. The Housing Capacity Study shows that on the Best Fit scenario, around 4120 dwelling units could be provided within the four towns and 14 villages. Including an additional 2264 for planning permissions since 2001, this leaves a total of around 9,400 dwellings to be located on greenfield sites. However it does offer the opportunity to address remediate existing contaminated land sites in the four towns.
- Focusing on existing towns may reduce the need to travel, as local services will be more accessible, and new residents will be able to use existing public transport, particularly the trains from Hitchin and Letchworth. However, 60% of residents currently drive a car or van to work, with an average journey of 15 miles to work and 14 miles for leisure, so this indicates that the majority of people are not working or using leisure facilities in their local town. Locating developments in the villages is likely to increase the need to travel, as there are currently few services and jobs in the villages, and it is unclear whether the new developments would be large enough to provide the new services and jobs needed. However, it is possible that the development could result in the size of the village increasing to a scale where it can support additional services and public transport provision.
- New housing will significantly increase water use in the District, and put significant pressure on water infrastructure. Based on an average use of water by customers of Anglian, which covers most of the District of around 127 litres per person per day for metered properties, this would be an increased use of 1.838 billion litres per annum. Environment Agency water strategy for the Anglian Region says that increases in abstraction from the aquifer are not acceptable, so additional water would need to be provided from regional reservoirs. The SEA of the RSS for the East of England Plan notes the pressure on water infrastructure in the region as a result of proposed new housing provision and the impacts of climate change. Since the District has amongst the lowest rainfall (125mm/y) in the UK, the new developments will reduce the District's ability to respond to climate change.
- The provision of large amounts of new housing is likely to have a positive impact on affordability, particularly if it includes significant amounts of affordable housing, and if some of this is aimed at particular groups in need such as young people, disabled people and key workers.

Recommendations for changes to this option and need for additional data:

- Undertake detailed research to determine the impacts on landscape, biodiversity and groundwater in specific locations.
- No changes are recommended, within the parameters of the requirement to provide extra housing.

DPD Option (b) Focus development on previously developed land (PDL) within existing urban areas

Note we have assumed that this means that the required housing provision will still be met (ie that there will be significant greenfield development).

Conclusions

- We have assumed that this option means that the required housing provision will still be met. Despite its emphasis on previously developed land in the towns, it will still therefore involve significant development on greenfield sites and possibly brownfield sites in villages. This in turn is likely to have significant impacts on biodiversity and landscape. The Housing Capacity Study shows that on the Best Fit scenario, around 4120 dwelling units could be provided within the four towns and 14 villages. Including an additional 2264 for planning permissions since 2001, this leaves a total of around 9,400 dwellings to be located on greenfield sites. However it does offer the opportunity to address remediate existing contaminated land sites in the four towns.
- Focusing on existing towns may reduce the need to travel, as local services will be more accessible, and new residents will be able to use existing public transport, particularly the trains from Hitchin and Letchworth. However, 60% of residents currently drive a car or van to work, with an average journey of 15 miles to work and 14 miles for leisure, so this indicates that the majority of people are not working or using leisure facilities in their local town.
- New housing will significantly increase water use in the District, and put significant pressure on water infrastructure. Based on an average use of water by customers of Anglian, which covers most of the District of around 127 litres per person per day for metered properties, this would be an increased use of 1.838 billion litres per annum. Environment Agency water strategy for the Anglian Region says that increases in abstraction from the aquifer are not acceptable, so additional water would need to be provided from regional reservoirs. The SEA of the RSS for the East of England Plan notes the pressure on water infrastructure in the region as a result of proposed new housing provision and the impacts of climate change. Since the District has amongst the lowest rainfall (125mm/y) in the UK, the new developments will reduce the District's ability to respond to climate change.
- The provision of large amounts of new housing is likely to have a positive impact on affordability, particularly if it includes significant amounts of affordable housing, and if some of this is aimed at particular groups in need such as young people, disabled people and key workers.

Recommendations for changes to this option and need for additional data:

- Undertake detailed research to determine the impacts on landscape, biodiversity and groundwater in specific locations.
- No changes are recommended, within the parameters of the requirement to provide extra housing

Option (c) Urban extensions on greenfield land adjoining existing towns

Conclusions

- This option will still clearly involve major development on greenfield sites. This in turn is likely to have significant impacts on access to green spaces, biodiversity and landscape.
- Impacts on biodiversity will depend on location, but if the development is an extension to Stevenage, the BAP indicates that the area west of Stevenage (Great Offley/Preston/Knebworth) is high in biodiversity.
- Impacts on landscape will also depend on the location of development. If it is an extension to Stevenage or Luton, this is likely to have a significant impact on the landscape of the area which has high recreational and amenity value, and provides an opportunity to be in contact with wildlife and wild places.
- New development will inevitably involve increased light and air and noise pollution from traffic. In particular an extension to Luton or Stevenage would result in significant loss of tranquillity in the area. Pollution of groundwater is also an issue as the District is on a major chalk aquifer with high groundwater vulnerability.

- The impacts on travel are complex. The urban extension will provide an opportunity to include community facilities for the new population and potentially new public transport infrastructure. If this was done, the impact could be positive. If the extension is located next to Stevenage or Luton, and appropriate public transport is provided, this could also have a positive impact in providing sustainable access to services in the two cities. However, 60% of residents currently drive a car or van to work, with an average journey of 15 miles to work and 14 miles for leisure, so this indicates that the majority of people are not working or using leisure facilities in their local town.
- New housing will significantly increase water use in the District, and put significant pressure on water infrastructure. Based on an average use of water by customers of Anglian, which covers most of the District of around 127 litres per person per day for metered properties, this would be an increased use of 1.838 billion litres per annum. Environment Agency water strategy for the Anglian Region says that increases in abstraction from the aquifer are not acceptable, so additional water would need to be provided from regional reservoirs. The SEA of the RSS for the East of England Plan notes the pressure on water infrastructure in the region as a result of proposed new housing provision and the impacts of climate change. Since the District has amongst the lowest rainfall (125mm/y) in the UK, the new developments will reduce the District's ability to respond to climate change.
- The provision of large amounts of new housing is likely to have a positive impact on affordability, particularly if it includes significant amounts of affordable housing, and if some of this is aimed at particular groups in need such as young people, disabled people and key workers.

Recommendations for changes to this option and need for additional data:

- Undertake detailed research to determine the impacts on landscape, biodiversity and groundwater in specific locations.
- No changes are recommended, within the parameters of the requirement to provide extra housing

Option (d) Build a new settlement

Conclusions

- This option will still clearly involve major development on a greenfield site. This in turn is likely to have significant impacts on biodiversity and landscape.
- Impacts on biodiversity and landscape will depend on the location of development. If it is an area between Baldock and Royston, this area may have a lower amenity and recreational value than some other parts of the District.
- New development will inevitably involve increased light and air and noise pollution from traffic. Pollution of groundwater is also an issue as the District is on a major chalk aquifer with high groundwater vulnerability.
- The impacts on travel are complex. A new settlement would provide an opportunity to include community facilities for the new population. If this was done, the impact could be positive, provided there is appropriate public transport. If there is rail access, it could support additional commuting by rail. However, 60% of residents currently drive a car or van to work, with an average journey of 15 miles to work and 14 miles for leisure, so this indicates that the majority of people are not working or using leisure facilities in their local town
- New housing will significantly increase water use in the District, and put significant pressure on water infrastructure. Based on an average use of water by customers of Anglian, which covers most of the District of around 127 litres per person per day for metered properties, this would be an increased use of 1.838 billion litres per annum. Environment Agency water strategy for the Anglian Region says that increases in abstraction from the aquifer are not acceptable, so additional water would need to be provided from regional reservoirs. The SEA of the RSS for the East of England Plan notes the pressure on water infrastructure in the region as a result of proposed new

housing provision and the impacts of climate change. Since the District has amongst the lowest rainfall (125mm/y) in the UK, the new developments will reduce the District's ability to respond to climate change.

- The provision of large amounts of new housing is likely to have a positive impact on affordability, particularly if it includes significant amounts of affordable housing, and if some of this is aimed at particular groups in need such as young people, disabled people and key workers.

Recommendations for changes to this option and need for additional data:

- Undertake detailed research to determine the impacts on landscape, biodiversity and groundwater in specific locations.
- No changes are recommended, within the parameters of the requirement to provide extra housing

Option (e) Use smaller greenfield sites in the villages

Conclusions

- This option implies that there would be a number of greenfield developments adjacent to villages, which is likely to have a significant impact on access to green space, biodiversity and landscape. Green space could be provided within the development, but the ability to be in contact with wildlife and wild places will be significantly reduced.
- The exact impacts would depend on location, but the BAP indicates that these areas include "areas high in biodiversity", key areas for farming wildlife and key grassland habitats. Taken together, the developments are likely to have a significant impact on landscape. Some of the areas around villages are in or close to the AONB.
- Locating developments adjacent to villages is likely to increase the need to travel, as there are currently few services and jobs in the villages, and it is unclear whether the new developments would be large enough to provide the new services and jobs needed. However, it is possible that the development could result in the size of the village increasing to a scale where it can support additional services and public transport provision
- This option should have a positive impact on the provision of services in rural areas.
- New housing will significantly increase water use in the District, and put significant pressure on water infrastructure. Based on an average use of water by customers of Anglian, which covers most of the District of around 127 litres per person per day for metered properties, this would be an increased use of 1.838 billion litres per annum. Environment Agency water strategy for the Anglian Region says that increases in abstraction from the aquifer are not acceptable, so additional water would need to be provided from regional reservoirs. The SEA of the RSS for the East of England Plan notes the pressure on water infrastructure in the region as a result of proposed new housing provision and the impacts of climate change. Since the District has amongst the lowest rainfall (125mm/y) in the UK, the new developments will reduce the District's ability to respond to climate change.
- The provision of large amounts of new housing is likely to have a positive impact on affordability, particularly if it includes significant amounts of affordable housing, and if some of this is aimed at particular groups in need such as young people, disabled people and key workers.

Recommendations for changes to this option and need for additional data:

- Undertake detailed research to determine the impacts on landscape, biodiversity, travel and groundwater in specific locations.
- No changes are recommended, within the parameters of the requirement to provide extra housing

3.2 Provision of affordable housing

Option (a) Continue with the present approach of negotiating for affordable housing at the rate identified in the current Local Plan

NB. This option reflects the approach taken in the current plan, i.e. it is the "business as usual" option

Conclusions

- The Housing Needs Survey notes that the current provision is not meeting the growth in need for affordable housing. It also points out that 75% of new households are not able to afford to purchase in their own right. Therefore this option will have a negative affect on affordability and access to decent housing, as it will result in increased, rather than decreased need. It also does not address the requirements for different types of affordable housing, and particularly the need for flats.
- The impact of this option on meeting the needs of specific groups in unclear. The Housing Needs Survey notes the need for sheltered housing for older people and supported and adapted housing for disabled people. It is not clear if this option would address these needs. It also points out that BME households have lower average incomes, and affordability is therefore more of an issue for them.

Recommendations for changes to this option and need for additional data:

- Establish the needs of older people and disabled people and clarify how they will be addressed
- Specify that the affordable housing should meet needs for different types of housing, particularly flats

Option (b) Increase the amount of affordable housing on larger sites to a higher percentage

Conclusions

- This option should have a positive affect on affordability and access to housing. The Housing Needs Survey notes that the current provision is not meeting the growth in need for affordable housing, and recommends a 35% rate of affordable housing on suitable sites. It also points out that 75% of new households are not able to afford to purchase in their own right. It should also address the requirements for different types of affordable housing, and particularly the need for flats.
- The impact of this option on meeting the needs of specific groups in unclear. The Housing Needs Survey notes the need for sheltered housing for older people and supported and adapted housing for disabled people. It is not clear if this option would address these needs. It also points out that BME households have lower average incomes, and affordability is therefore more of an issue for them.

Recommendations for changes to this option and need for additional data:

- Establish the needs of older people and disabled people and clarify how they will be addressed
- Specify that the affordable housing should meet needs for different types of housing, particularly flats

Option (c) Lower the threshold to include smaller sites, where the economics of provision will allow.

Conclusions

- As with the previous options, this option should have a positive affect on affordability and access to housing. The Housing Needs Survey notes that the current provision is not meeting the growth in need for affordable housing, and recommends a 35% rate of affordable housing on suitable sites. It also points out that 75% of new households are not able to afford to purchase in their own right. It should also address the requirements for different types of affordable housing, and particularly the need for flats.
- The impact of this option on meeting the needs of specific groups in unclear. The

Housing Needs Survey notes the need for sheltered housing for older people and supported and adapted housing for disabled people. It is not clear if this option would address these needs. It also points out that BME households have lower average incomes, and affordability is therefore more of an issue for them.

Recommendations for changes to this option and need for additional data:

- Establish the needs of older people and disabled people and clarify how they will be addressed
- Specify that the affordable housing should meet needs for different types of housing, particularly flats

Option (d) Introduce a lower threshold for the village than the towns

Conclusions

- This option is likely to meet the needs of the young and older people to remain living in the villages which would promote community cohesion and meet the housing needs of these groups.. The Housing Needs Survey notes that the current provision is not meeting the growth in need for affordable housing, and recommends a 35% rate of affordable housing on suitable sites. It also points out that 75% of new households are not able to afford to purchase in their own right. It should also address the requirements for different types of affordable housing, and particularly the need for flats.
- The impact of this option on meeting the needs of specific groups is unclear. The Housing Needs Survey notes the need for sheltered housing for older people and supported and adapted housing for disabled people. It is not clear if this option would address these needs. It also points out that BME households have lower average incomes, and affordability is therefore more of an issue for them.

Recommendations for changes to this option and need for additional data:

- Establish the needs of older people and disabled people and clarify how they will be addressed
- Specify that the affordable housing should meet needs for different types of housing, particularly flats

3.3 How to obtain additional funding for affordable housing

Option (a) Change the definition of local need to attract more funding for affordable housing from the Housing Corporation – for example accepting people in need from other Districts

Conclusions

- It is unclear whether this option would meet the increased need for affordable housing pointed out in the Housing Needs Survey
- The impact of this option on meeting the needs of specific groups is unclear. The Housing Needs Survey notes the need for sheltered housing for older people and supported and adapted housing for disabled people. It is not clear if this option would address these needs. It also points out that BME households have lower average incomes, and affordability is therefore more of an issue for them.

Recommendations for changes to this option and need for additional data:

- Establish the needs of older people and disabled people and clarify how they will be addressed

Option (b) Where the developer can demonstrate in an 'open book' valuation that there is insufficient subsidy to make the scheme viable, accept a lower proportion of affordable units on site.

Conclusions

- Most of the impacts of this option on sustainability are neutral
- Although this option will result in less affordable housing on site than normally required, the alternative is likely to be that there would be no development at all.
- The impact of this option on meeting the needs of specific groups is unclear. The Housing Needs Survey notes the need for sheltered housing for older people and supported and adapted housing for disabled people. It is not clear if this option would address these needs

Recommendations for changes to this option and need for additional data:

- Establish the needs of older people and disabled people and clarify how they will be addressed

Option (c) Where the developer can demonstrate in an 'open book' valuation that there is insufficient subsidy to make the scheme viable, accept financial contributions towards "off-site provision"

Conclusions

- Most of the impacts of this option on sustainability are neutral
- Although this option will result in less affordable housing on site than normally required, the alternative is likely to be that there would be no development at all.
- The impact of this option on meeting the needs of specific groups is unclear. The Housing Needs Survey notes the need for sheltered housing for older people and supported and adapted housing for disabled people. It is not clear if this option would address these needs though off-site provision would possibly allow contributions towards sheltered or adapted housing elsewhere.

Recommendations for changes to this option and need for additional data:

- Establish the needs of older people and disabled people and clarify how they will be addressed

Option (e) No formal policy

Note: this is an additional option, reflecting current practice, added to the options included within the Options report. The SEA Directive requires that current practice ("business as usual") be appraised.

In the appraisal of this option, we have assumed that having no formal policy would therefore result in no actions to obtain additional subsidy for affordable housing. It should be noted also that there is no option (d) to appraise, as option (d) is simply "other" in the options report.

Conclusions

- This option misses the opportunity to obtain additional funding to meet the increased need for affordable housing pointed out in the Housing Needs Survey. However, it is unclear whether any policy would address current needs within the District .
- This option also missed the opportunity to meet the needs of specific groups, though it is unclear whether it could have an impact on existing local need. The Housing Needs Survey notes the need for sheltered housing for older people and supported and adapted housing for disabled people. It is not clear if this option would address these needs. It also points out that BME households have lower average incomes, and affordability is therefore more of an issue for them.

Recommendations for changes to this option and need for additional data:

- Establish the needs of older people and disabled people and clarify how they will be addressed

3.4 Affordable housing in rural areas

Option (a) Continue to encourage rural exception sites, in or adjacent to villages, where appropriate in environmental terms and where there is a proven local need
NB. This option reflects the approach taken in the current plan, i.e. it is the “business as usual” option

Conclusions

- This option will have a positive impact on access to services for all, provision of housing and community cohesion. In particular it should allow the young and elderly to remain in the villages
- Village locations are less accessible by public transport. However, if the developments are to meet local need, they should not result in increased car use.
- It is presumed “where appropriate in environmental terms” means that impact on biodiversity, landscape and the historic environment would be avoided.
- This option will have a negative affect on use of greenfield land

Recommendations for changes to this option:

- None

Option (b) Don't allow the development of rural exception sites and meet rural housing needs within the identified village boundaries or within the towns

Conclusions

- This option will have a negative impact on access to services for all, provision of housing and community cohesion. It will make it more difficult to provide affordable housing in rural areas and to allow the young and elderly to remain in the villages
- This option will have a positive affect on use of greenfield land

Recommendations for changes to this option:

- None

3.5 Ensuring a range of housing types and styles

Option (a) To include a policy which ensures that a mix of sizes and types of property is built on all sites over a certain size.

Conclusions

- This option should have a positive affect on affordability and access to housing. The Housing Needs Survey points to the fact that the preference and need for flats are much higher than the stock level. If this policy results in a greater percentage of flats available, it should have a positive impact. However, this would require priority to be given to flats.
- This option should benefit young people wanting flats, and possibly older people wanting to move from larger family homes. It should also benefit community cohesion, by allowing them to remain in their communities.

Recommendations for changes to this option:

- Specify that priority would be given to flats

Option (b) To allow the market to determine the dwelling types provided
NB. This option reflects the approach taken in the current plan, i.e. it is the “business as usual” option

Conclusions

- It is not clear what affect this option would have on affordability and access to housing. The Housing Needs Survey points to the fact that the preference and need for flats are much higher than the stock level. It is not clear whether the market would provide the additional flats without intervention. The next Housing Needs Survey should address this issue. Provision of additional flats should contribute to affordability.

- Likewise the impacts on the needs of specific groups and community cohesion are unclear. If the market resulted in additional flats, this option would benefit young people wanting flats, and possibly older people wanting to move from larger family homes. It would also benefit community cohesion, by allowing them to remain in their communities.

Recommendations for changes to this option:

- None

3.6 Accommodation for Gypsy and Traveller families

Option (a) Identify a new site

Conclusions

- Clearly this option would meet the needs of specific group, provided that the assessment being undertaken identifies that there are needs for an additional site in the District .
- With the same proviso, this option would also have a positive affect on the health of gypsies and travellers. A Department of Health Report “The Health Status of Gypsies and travellers in England” found that “Gypsy Travellers have significantly poorer health status and significantly more self-reported symptoms of ill-health than other UK-resident, English speaking ethnic minorities and economically disadvantaged white UK residents”. The provision of necessary accommodation would help create conditions to promote good health, and help access health services but as the DOH report found, access to health care would still be difficult.
- The option should also help gypsies and travellers access education and recreational facilities.
- Its impacts on community cohesion and fear of crime are unclear. Provision of sites for gypsies and travellers can be a controversial issue. The provision of a new site, if not properly handled, could result in animosity, and feelings of lack of safety from the local community and gypsies and travellers. Therefore the location of the site needs to be chosen in full consultation with the all involved. Once established appropriate support needs to be given to the gypsies and travellers to help them establish in the local community (for example for helping children settle at school) and build trust and understanding between them and the local community.

Recommendations for changes to this option:

- Specify that any new site would be identified in full consultation with the local community and gypsies and travellers and would require appropriate local support to the gypsies and travellers.

Option (b) Expand the existing site

Conclusions

- Clearly this option would meet the needs of specific group, provided that the assessment being undertaken identifies that there are needs for additional provision in the District.
- With the same proviso, this option would also have a positive affect on the health of gypsies and travellers. A Department of Health Report “The Health Status of Gypsies and travellers in England” found that “Gypsy Travellers have significantly poorer health status and significantly more self-reported symptoms of ill-health than other UK-resident, English speaking ethnic minorities and economically disadvantaged white UK residents”. The provision of necessary accommodation would help create conditions to promote good health, and help access health services but as the DOH report found, access to health care would still be difficult.
- The option should also help gypsies and travellers access education and recreational facilities.
- Its impacts on community cohesion and fear of crime are unclear. Provision of sites for gypsies and travellers can be a controversial issue. The expansion of the site, if not properly handled, could result in animosity, and feelings of lack of safety from the

local community and gypsies and travellers. Therefore the location of the site needs to be chosen in full consultation with all involved. Appropriate support needs to be given to the gypsies and travellers to help them establish in the local community (for example for helping children settle at school) and build trust and understanding between them and the local community.

Recommendations for changes to this option:

- Specify that the expansion of the site would be undertaken in full consultation with the local community and would require appropriate local support to the gypsies and travellers.

Option (d) No formal policy

Note: this is an additional option, reflecting current practice, added to the options included within the Options report. The SEA Directive requires that current practice ("business as usual") be appraised.

In the appraisal of this option, we have assumed that having no formal policy would therefore in result in no actions to obtain additional provision for traveller and gypsy accommodation.

It should be noted also that there is no option (c) to appraise, as option (c) is simply "other" in the options report.

Conclusions

- If the assessment being undertaken identifies that there are needs for additional provision in the District, this option would have a negative impact by not actively addressing those needs.
- Likewise, this option would also have a negative affect on the health of gypsies and travellers, and make it more difficult for them to access health services, and education and recreational facilities
- Its impacts on community cohesion and fear of crime are unclear. Provision of sites for gypsies and travellers can be a controversial issue, and if not properly handled, could result in animosity and feelings of lack of safety from the local community and gypsies and travellers. This option avoids addressing that issue, however, it could result in gypsies and travellers being forced to camp illegally.

Recommendations for changes to this option:

- None

3.7 Contributions to local facilities

Option (a) Include a policy requiring contributions from all new housing developments.

Conclusions

- The impact on affordability and access to housing, depends on the level of contributions required, and whether this discourages a significant number of developments. If it does, it could have a negative affect. It is recommended that further research be undertaken by adopting such a policy.
- This option would have a positive impact on the provision of local facilities, including community facilities. Ideally these facilities should recognise the needs of specific groups. It could also contribute to the provision of health, educational and recreational facilities, and services in town centres.

Recommendations for changes to this option and need for additional information

- It is recommended that further research be undertaken by adopting such a policy.

Option (b) Include a policy requiring contributions only from housing sites over a

specified size

Conclusions

- More information is needed to judge the impact of this. The impact depends whether it still has the affect of discouraging small housing developments, which in turn depends on the size of the site and the level of contribution. It is recommended that further research be undertaken by adopting such a policy.
- This option would have a positive impact on the provision of local facilities, including community facilities. Ideally these facilities should recognise the needs of specific groups. It could also contribute to the provision of health, educational and recreational facilities, and services in town centres.

Recommendations for changes to this option and need for additional information

- It is recommended that further research be undertaken by adopting such a policy.

Option (c) Do not include a policy on contributions and negotiate on an ad-hoc basis with each developer

NB. This option reflects the approach taken in the current plan, i.e. it is the "business as usual" option

Conclusions

- This option is likely to make a positive contribution to the provision of local facilities. . It could also contribute to the provision of health, educational and recreational facilities, and services in town centres. Without more information, it is unclear how the contribution would compare with the other options. Without a fixed "tariff" there is the potential for developers to push for a reduced contribution, on the other hand, this does avoid discouraging small schemes.
- This option is likely to avoid discouraging small schemes, and therefore make a positive contribution to provision of affordable housing

Recommendations for changes to this option and need for additional information

- It is recommended that further research be undertaken by adopting such a policy.

4. Employment and tourism

4.1 Location of additional employment land

Option (a) No new Employment Areas should be designated and there should no expansion of existing ones.

Conclusions:

- Although there is currently an overall surplus of employment land at County level, the key issue is provision of more high quality employment in the District, and it is unclear whether this can be addressed through provision of employment land. It is recommended that the employment study address this issue.
- The impact on journeys by car depends whether existing provision is sufficient to attract employers to meet local needs for employment, taking account of the future housing provision. 60% of residents currently drive a car or van to work, with an average journey of 15 miles to work. It seems likely that without provision of additional employment land, the increased population will result increased travel to work by car, and increased impact on global warming. This would work against the District's targets to reduce the distance travelled per person by 5% by 2021 and reduce car use overall. It is recommended that the employment land study examine this issue.
- Likewise it is difficult to assess the impact on disadvantaged communities. This

depends whether provision of sites in Letchworth and Hitchin is sufficient to meet employment needs of those communities. It is recommended that the employment study address this issue. However, provision of sites alone will not ensure that the jobs go to local people.

- This option will have a positive impact on the protection of greenfield land.

Recommendations for changes to this option and need for additional data

It is recommended that the employment study examine the following issues:

- Whether provision of more high quality employment in the District can be addressed through appropriate provision of employment land
- The need for additional employment land to ensure that the increased population from the new housing is able to work locally
- How the needs of the disadvantaged communities in Letchworth and Hitchin can be met through the provision of employment land, or other means, such as working with employers to target and support local people into work.

The sustainability of all the options for this issue depends on the outcome of the employment study. Therefore no changes are recommended at this stage.

Option (b) Completely new Employment Areas should be designated, but only within existing settlements.

Conclusions:

- Although there is currently an overall surplus of employment land at County level, the key issue is provision of more high quality employment in the District, and it is unclear whether this can be addressed through provision of employment land. It is recommended that the employment study address this issue.
- The impact on journeys by car depends whether existing provision is sufficient to attract employers to meet local needs for employment, taking account of the future housing provision. 60% of residents currently drive a car or van to work, with an average journey of 15 miles to work. It seems likely that without provision of additional employment land, the increased population will result increased travel to work by car, and increased impact on global warming. This option would therefore have a positive impact. This would contribute to the District's targets to reduce the distance travelled per person by 5% by 2021 and reduce car use overall. It is recommended that the employment land study examine this issue.
- If this option includes the 14 villages, it could help improve access to village employment (if there are any available sites within the villages), and improve village services.
- This option will have a positive impact on the key sustainability issue of use of greenfield land, assuming that "within existing settlements" means on brownfield sites .
- New employment provision will use water and other resources.
- The impact on town centres depends on location of new sites and the employment classes allowed

Recommendations for changes to this option and need for additional data

- Clarify that "within existing settlements" means on brownfield sites
- Clarify whether "existing settlements" includes the 14 villages

It is recommended that the employment study examine the following issues:

- Whether provision of more high quality employment in the District can be addressed through appropriate provision of employment land
- The need for additional employment land to ensure that the increased population from the new housing is able to work locally
- How the needs of the disadvantaged communities in Letchworth and Hitchin can be met through the provision of employment land, or other means, such as working with employers to target and support local people into work.

The sustainability of all the options for this issue depends on the outcome of the employment study. Therefore no changes are recommended at this stage.

Option (c) Completely new Employment Areas should be designated within or adjoining existing settlements.

Conclusions:

- Although there is currently an overall surplus of employment land at County level, the key issue is provision of more high quality employment in the District, and it is unclear whether this can be addressed through provision of employment land. It is recommended that the employment study address this issue.
- The impact on journeys by car depends whether existing provision is sufficient to attract employers to meet local needs for employment, taking account of the future housing provision. 60% of residents currently drive a car or van to work, with an average journey of 15 miles to work. It seems likely that without provision of additional employment land, the increased population will result increased travel to work by car, and increased impact on global warming. This option would therefore have a positive impact, which would be increased by provision of adequate public transport to the sites. This would contribute to the District's targets to reduce the distance travelled per person by 5% by 2021 and reduce car use overall. It is recommended that the employment land study examine this issue.
- If this option includes the 14 villages, it could help improve access to village employment and services(if there are any available sites within the villages).
- This option will have a negative impact on the key sustainability issues of use of greenfield land and protection of biodiversity.
- New employment provision will use water and other resources.
- The impact on town centres depends on location of new sites and the employment classes allowed

Recommendations for changes to this option and need for additional data

- Clarify that "within existing settlements" means on brownfield sites
- Clarify whether "existing settlements" includes the 14 villages

It is recommended that the employment study examine the following issues:

- Whether provision of more high quality employment in the District can be addressed through appropriate provision of employment land
- The need for additional employment land to ensure that the increased population from the new housing is able to work locally
- How the needs of the disadvantaged communities in Letchworth and Hitchin can be met through the provision of employment land, or other means, such as working with employers to target and support local people into work.

The sustainability of all the options for this issue depends on the outcome of the employment study. Therefore no changes are recommended at this stage.

Option (d) There should be extensions to existing Employment Areas, but only within existing settlements.

Conclusions:

- Although there is currently an overall surplus of employment land at County level, the key issue is provision of more high quality employment in the District, and it is unclear whether this can be addressed through provision of employment land. It is recommended that the employment study address this issue.
- The impact on journeys by car depends whether existing provision is sufficient to attract employers to meet local needs for employment, taking account of the future housing provision. 60% of residents currently drive a car or van to work, with an average journey of 15 miles to work. It seems likely that without provision of additional employment land, the increased population will result increased travel to work by car, and increased impact on global warming. This option would therefore have a positive impact, which would be increased by provision of adequate public transport to the sites. This would contribute to the District's targets to reduce the

distance travelled per person by 5% by 2021 and reduce car use overall. It is recommended that the employment land study examine this issue

- It is also difficult to assess the impact on disadvantaged communities. Current sites are in the four main towns. In theory, new sites this could provide more jobs for unemployed people in Hitchin and Letchworth particularly but there is no guarantee that the jobs would go to local people.
- This option will have a positive impact on the key sustainability issue of use of greenfield land, assuming that “within existing settlements” means on brownfield sites .
- New employment provision will use water and other resources.
- The impact on town centres depends on location of new sites and the employment classes allowed

Recommendations for changes to this option and need for additional data

- Clarify that “within existing settlements” means on brownfield sites

It is recommended that the employment study examine the following issues:

- Whether provision of more high quality employment in the District can be addressed through appropriate provision of employment land
- The need for additional employment land to ensure that the increased population from the new housing is able to work locally
- How the needs of the disadvantaged communities in Letchworth and Hitchin can be met through the provision of employment land, or other means, such as working with employers to target and support local people into work.
- The sustainability of all the options for this issue depends on the outcome of the employment study. Therefore no changes are recommended at this stage.

Option (e) There should be extensions to existing Employment Areas within or adjoining existing settlements.

Conclusions:

- Although there is currently an overall surplus of employment land at County level, the key issue is provision of more high quality employment in the District, and it is unclear whether this can be addressed through provision of employment land. It is recommended that the employment study address this issue.
- The impact on journeys by car depends whether existing provision is sufficient to attract employers to meet local needs for employment, taking account of the future housing provision. 60% of residents currently drive a car or van to work, with an average journey of 15 miles to work. It seems likely that without provision of additional employment land, the increased population will result increased travel to work by car, and increased impact on global warming. This option would therefore have a positive impact, which would be increased by provision of adequate public transport to the sites. This would contribute to the District’s targets to reduce the distance travelled per person by 5% by 2021 and reduce car use overall. It is recommended that the employment land study examine this issue
- It is also difficult to assess the impact on disadvantaged communities. Current sites are in the four main towns. In theory, new sites this could provide more jobs for unemployed people in Hitchin and Letchworth particularly but there is no guarantee that the jobs would go to local people.
- This option will have a negative impact on the key sustainability issues of use of greenfield land and protection of biodiversity.
- New employment provision will use water and other resources.
- The impact on town centres depends on location of new sites and the employment classes allowed

Recommendations for changes to this option and need for additional data

- Clarify that “within existing settlements” means on brownfield sites

It is recommended that the employment study examine the following issues:

- Whether provision of more high quality employment in the District can be addressed

through appropriate provision of employment land

- The need for additional employment land to ensure that the increased population from the new housing is able to work locally
- How the needs of the disadvantaged communities in Letchworth and Hitchin can be met through the provision of employment land, or other means, such as working with employers to target and support local people into work.
- The sustainability of all the options for this issue depends on the outcome of the employment study. Therefore no changes are recommended at this stage.

Option (g) No formal policy

Note: this is an additional option, reflecting current practice, added to the options included within the Options report. The SEA Directive requires that current practice ("business as usual") be appraised.

In the appraisal of this option, we have assumed that having no formal policy would therefore in result in the designation of no new employment land.

It should be noted also that there is no option (f) to appraise, as option (f) is simply "other" in the options report

Conclusions:

- Although there is currently an overall surplus of employment land at County level, the key issue is provision of more high quality employment in the District, and it is unclear whether this can be addressed through provision of employment land. It is recommended that the employment study address this issue.
- The impact on journeys by car depends whether existing provision is sufficient to attract employers to meet local needs for employment, taking account of the future housing provision. 60% of residents currently drive a car or van to work, with an average journey of 15 miles to work. It seems likely that without provision of additional employment land, the increased population will result increased travel to work by car, and increased impact on global warming. This would work against the District's targets to reduce the distance travelled per person by 5% by 2021 and reduce car use overall. It is recommended that the employment land study examine this issue.
- Likewise it is difficult to assess the impact on disadvantaged communities. This depends whether provision of sites in Letchworth and Hitchin is sufficient to meet employment needs of those communities. It is recommended that the employment study address this issue. However, provision of sites alone will not ensure that the jobs go to local people.
- This option will have a positive impact on the protection of greenfield land.

Recommendations for changes to this option and need for additional data

It is recommended that the employment study examine the following issues:

- Whether provision of more high quality employment in the District can be addressed through appropriate provision of employment land
- The need for additional employment land to ensure that the increased population from the new housing is able to work locally
- How the needs of the disadvantaged communities in Letchworth and Hitchin can be met through the provision of employment land, or other means, such as working with employers to target and support local people into work.
- The sustainability of all the options for this issue depends on the outcome of the employment study. Therefore no changes are recommended at this stage.

4.2 Loss of employment uses

Option (a) Let market forces determine the uses within employment Areas

Conclusions:

- As with the previous set of options, it is impossible to assess the sustainability of this

option on the key issue of the provision of more high quality employment. More information is needed on whether the current provision of employment land is appropriate to meet local need. It is recommended that the employment study address this issue. However, it seems unlikely that market forces will result in more high quality employment.

- As with the previous set of options, the impact on journeys by car depends whether existing provision is sufficient to attract employers to meet local needs for employment, taking account of the future housing provision. 60% of residents currently drive a car or van to work, with an average journey of 15 miles to work. It seems likely that without provision of additional employment land, the increased population will result increased travel to work by car, and increased impact on global warming. This option would therefore have a negative impact. This would work against the District's targets to reduce the distance travelled per person by 5% by 2021 and reduce car use overall. It is recommended that the employment land study examine this issue
- Likewise it is difficult to assess the impact on the needs of disadvantaged communities. This depends whether provision of sites in Letchworth and Hitchin is sufficient to meet needs of those communities. It is recommended that the employment study address this issue.
- This option could have a positive impact on the objectives of improving access to local services, improving community cohesion (by providing community facilities) improving access to culture and recreation, and providing affordable housing. Although it has already resulted in the provision of community facilities, market forces alone will not necessarily deliver this.
- Impact on town centres depends on whether new uses compete with town centre uses

Recommendations for changes to this option and need for additional data

It is recommended that the employment study examine the following issues:

- Whether provision of more high quality employment in the District can be addressed through appropriate provision of employment land
- The need for additional employment land to ensure that the increased population from the new housing is able to work locally
- How the needs of the disadvantaged communities in Letchworth and Hitchin can be met through the provision of employment land, or other means, such as working with employers to target and support local people into work.

The sustainability of all the options for this issue depends on the outcome of the employment study. Therefore no changes are recommended at this stage.

Option (b) Safeguard employment uses within the Employment Areas, unless sites are no longer suitable for employment use (e.g. because of poor location, condition or low/no market demand etc), but with restrictions on the type of alternative uses which will be acceptable.

Conclusions:

- As with the previous set of options, it is impossible to assess the sustainability of this option on the key issue of the provision of more high quality employment. More information is needed on whether the current provision of employment land is appropriate to meet local need. It is recommended that the employment study address this issue.
- Likewise it is difficult to assess the impact on the needs of disadvantaged communities. This depends whether provision of sites in Letchworth and Hitchin is sufficient to meet needs of those communities. It is recommended that the employment study address this issue.
- This option could have a positive impact on the objectives of improving access to local services, improving community cohesion (by providing community facilities) improving access to culture and recreation, and providing affordable housing. Restrictions on alternative uses would make this positive impact more likely than the

previous option.

- Impact on town centres depends on whether new uses compete with town centre uses

Recommendations for changes to this option and need for additional data

It is recommended that the employment study examine the following issues:

- Whether provision of more high quality employment in the District can be addressed through appropriate provision of employment land
- The need for additional employment land to ensure that the increased population from the new housing is able to work locally
- How the needs of the disadvantaged communities in Letchworth and Hitchin can be met through the provision of employment land, or other means, such as working with employers to target and support local people into work.

The sustainability of all the options for this issue depends on the outcome of the employment study. Therefore no changes are recommended at this stage.

Option (c) Safeguard employment uses within the Employment Areas, unless sites are no longer suitable for employment use (e.g. because of poor location, condition or low/no market demand etc), with no restrictions on the type of alternative uses which will be acceptable.

Conclusions:

- As with the previous set of options, it is impossible to assess the sustainability of this option on the key issue of the provision of more high quality employment. More information is needed on whether the current provision of employment land is appropriate to meet local need. The employment study may shed light on this.
- Likewise it is difficult to assess the impact on the needs of disadvantaged communities. This depends whether provision of sites in Letchworth and Hitchin is sufficient to meet needs of those communities. It is recommended that the employment study address this issue.
- This option could have a positive impact on the objectives of improving access to local services, improving community cohesion (by providing community facilities) improving access to culture and recreation, and providing affordable housing. However, lack of restrictions on alternative uses would make this positive impact less likely than the previous option.
- With no restriction on use, there is a likelihood that new uses would conflict with town centre uses.

Recommendations for changes to this option and need for additional data

It is recommended that the employment study examine the following issues:

- Whether provision of more high quality employment in the District can be addressed through appropriate provision of employment land
- The need for additional employment land to ensure that the increased population from the new housing is able to work locally
- How the needs of the disadvantaged communities in Letchworth and Hitchin can be met through the provision of employment land, or other means, such as working with employers to target and support local people into work.

Option (d) Safeguard employment uses within the Employment Areas, unless studies demonstrate lack of need in the area
NB. This option reflects the approach taken in the current plan, i.e. it is the "business as usual" option

Conclusions:

- This option clearly will provide land to meet needs identified by employment studies, and should have a positive impact on the local economy. However, it is likely that the barrier is not provision of employment land.
- As with the previous set of options, it is impossible to assess the sustainability of this option on the key issue of the provision of more high quality employment. More

information is needed on whether the current provision of employment land is appropriate to meet local need. It is recommended that the employment study address this issue.

- Likewise it is difficult to assess the impact on the needs of disadvantaged communities. This depends whether provision of sites in Letchworth and Hitchin is sufficient to meet needs of those communities. It is recommended that the employment study address this issue.

Recommendations for changes to this option and need for additional data

It is recommended that the employment study examine the following issues:

- Whether provision of more high quality employment in the District can be addressed through appropriate provision of employment land
- The need for additional employment land to ensure that the increased population from the new housing is able to work locally
- How the needs of the disadvantaged communities in Letchworth and Hitchin can be met through the provision of employment land, or other means, such as working with employers to target and support local people into work.

The sustainability of all the options for this issue depends on the outcome of the employment study. Therefore no changes are recommended at this stage.

4.3 Distribution of employment provision

Option (a) Any new employment provision should be concentrated in Hitchin

Conclusions:

- It is assumed that since the issue of need for employment provision has already been discussed, this option implies that the additional provision is to meet local need. Therefore the impact of this option on the economic objective would be positive. However, as discussed before, the significant sustainability issue is provision of more high quality employment. This option would not necessarily deliver that.
- In theory, this option would have a positive impact on reducing the need to travel and on inequity by providing jobs for local people, and for unemployed people in Hitchin and Letchworth. However, this depends on public transport access for those without at car. Also there is no guarantee the jobs would go to these people
- It is assumed that “within Hitchin ” implies that brownfield sites will be used. If this is the case, the affect would be to avoid the use or greenfield for new employment in the medium and long term. However, the option does not say that no other employment provision would be made, so there could be green field sites used elsewhere
- Impact on town centres depends on location of new sites, and how B1 classes are treated.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- Clarify that “within Hitchin” means on brownfield sites
- Specify that uses should not conflict with town centre uses
- This option would be more sustainable if new provision was linked with support for employers to employ local people

Option (b) Any new employment provision should be concentrated in Letchworth

Conclusions:

- It is assumed that since the issue of need for employment provision has already been discussed, this option implies that the additional provision is to meet local need. Therefore the impact of this option on the economic objective would be positive. However, as discussed before, the significant sustainability issue is provision of more

high quality employment. This option would not necessarily deliver that.

- In theory, this option would have a positive impact on reducing the need to travel and on inequity by providing jobs for local people, and for unemployed people in Hitchin and Letchworth. However, this depends on public transport access for those without a car. Also there is no guarantee the jobs would go to these people
- It is assumed that “within Letchworth ” implies that brownfield sites will be used. If this is the case, the affect would be to avoid the use of greenfield for new employment in the medium and long term. However, the option does not say that no other employment provision would be made, so there could be green field sites used elsewhere
- Impact on town centres depends on location of new sites, and how B1 classes are treated.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- Clarify that “within Letchworth” means on brownfield sites
- Specify that uses should not conflict with town centre uses
- This option would be more sustainable if new provision was linked with support for employers to employ local people

Option (c) Any new employment provision should be concentrated in Baldock

Conclusions:

- It is assumed that since the issue of need for employment provision has already been discussed, this option implies that the additional provision is to meet local need. Therefore the impact of this option on the economic objective would be positive. However, as discussed before, the significant sustainability issue is provision of more high quality employment. This option would not necessarily deliver that.
- In theory, this option would have a positive impact on reducing the need to travel and on inequity by providing jobs for local people, and for unemployed people in nearby Hitchin and Letchworth. However, accessibility depends on public transport access for those without a car. Also, there is no guarantee the jobs would go to these people
- It is assumed that “within Baldock ” implies that brownfield sites will be used. If this is the case, the affect would be to avoid the use of greenfield for new employment in the medium and long term. However, the option does not say that no other employment provision would be made, so there could be green field sites used elsewhere.
- Impact on town centres depends on location of new sites, and how B1 classes are treated.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- Clarify that “within Baldock” means on brownfield sites
- Specify that uses should not conflict with town centre uses
- This option would be more sustainable if new provision was linked with support for employers to employ local people

Option (d) Any new employment provision should be concentrated in Royston

Conclusions:

- It is assumed that since the issue of need for employment provision has already been discussed, this option implies that the additional provision is to meet local need. Therefore the impact of this option on the economic objective would be positive. However, given the high employment levels in the town, it is less likely to do so than other options. Also as discussed before, the significant sustainability issue is provision of more high quality employment. This option would not necessarily deliver that.

- In theory, this option would have a positive impact on reducing the need to travel by providing jobs for local people. However, given the high employment rates in Royston, and the location in the District, this option would have a less positive impact than the other options. Accessibility depends on public transport access for those without a car. Also, there is no guarantee the jobs would go to local people
- This option also is less accessible to unemployed people in Letchworth and Hitchin, particularly for those without a car.
- It is assumed that “within Royston ” implies that brownfield sites will be used. If this is the case, the affect would be to avoid the use or greenfield for new employment in the medium and long term. However, the option does not say that no other employment provision would be made, so there could be green field sites used elsewhere.
- Impact on town centres depends on location of new sites, and how B1 classes are treated.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- Clarify that “within Royston” means on brownfield sites
- Specify that uses should not conflict with town centre uses
- This option would be more sustainable if new provision was linked with support for employers to employ local people

Option (e) Any new employment provision should be allocated where there are available sites which are accessible by public transport and a market for the premises
NB. This option reflects the approach taken in the current plan, i.e. it is the “business as usual” option

Conclusions:

- It is assumed that since the issue of need for employment provision has already been discussed, this option implies that the additional provision is to meet local need. Therefore the impact of this option on the economic objective would be positive. However, as discussed before, the significant sustainability issue is provision of more high quality employment. This option would not necessarily deliver that.
- This option would have a positive impact on reducing the need to travel and on inequity by providing accessible jobs for local people, and for unemployed people in Hitchin and Letchworth. However, there is no guarantee the jobs would go to these people
- It is assumed that “available sites ” implies that brownfield sites will be used. If this is the case, the affect would be to avoid the use or greenfield for new employment in the medium and long term.
- Impact on town centres depends on location of new sites, and how B1 classes are treated.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- Clarify that “available sites” means on brownfield sites
- Specify that uses should not conflict with town centre uses
- This option would be more sustainable if new provision was linked with support for employers to employ local people

4.4 Promotion of tourism

Option (a) Do not include policies relating to tourist related development and therefore rely on the latest Government advice.

Conclusions :

- This option would miss the opportunity to include a policy promoting sustainable tourism. and therefore have a negative affect on reducing car use, production of

greenhouse gases, and resource use.

- However, it would be likely to result in more conversions in rural areas, which could contribute to the rural economy.
- It would also make it more difficult to control some uses such as golf courses, and therefore would have a negative impact on car travel, climate change, and possibly biodiversity and landscape.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- None

Option (b) Include a general policy covering a variety of tourist related proposals.
NB. This option reflects the approach taken in the current plan, i.e. it is the "business as usual" option

Conclusions :

- The impact of this option depends whether the policy promotes sustainable tourism, which could have a positive impact on reducing car use, production of greenhouse gases, and resource use.
- The impact also depends on whether it controls the location of uses such as golf courses. (It is assumed that other uses involving buildings would be controlled by other policies in the plan) If it does, this would have a positive impact on reducing car travel and greenhouse gas emissions, and possibly on protecting landscape and biodiversity.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- Specify that the policy would promote sustainable tourism and restrict location of uses such as golf courses which involve the use of land rather than buildings.

Option (c) Include more specific policies on tourist related topics such as guest houses, hotels, guest houses and bed and breakfast accommodation

Conclusions :

From a sustainability point of view, the impacts are the same as option (b), namely:

- The impact of this option depends whether the policy promotes sustainable tourism, which could have a positive impact on reducing car use, production of greenhouse gases, and resource use.
- The impact also depends on whether it controls the location of uses such as golf courses. (It is assumed that other uses involving buildings would be controlled by other policies in the plan) If it does, this would have a positive impact on reducing car travel and greenhouse gas emissions, and possibly on protecting landscape and biodiversity.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- Specify that the policy would promote sustainable tourism and restrict location of uses such as golf courses which involve the use of land rather than buildings.

5. Town Centres

5.1 Shopping uses

<p>Option (a) Let market forces determine the mix of uses in town centres.</p>
<p>Conclusions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is very difficult to predict the impact of this option because it is impossible to be certain what mix of uses would result in town centres as a result of market forces. • However, there is no guarantee that this option would support town centre vitality and viability, and the Town Centre retail study concludes that this option could be potentially damaging to the balance of retail and other uses within town centres, with a possible adverse impact on noise levels and disturbance. <p>Recommendations for changes to this option</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None

<p>Option (b) Define Primary and Secondary shopping areas, with greater restrictions on the loss of shops in the primary areas.</p>
<p>Conclusions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is very difficult to predict the impact of this option because it is impossible to be certain how potential town centre occupiers would respond to this option. • However, the Town Centre and Retail Study concludes that if restrictions were placed on the loss of shops in secondary shopping areas that this could lead to an increase in vacant units because demand for retail occupiers is unlikely to be as strong within peripheral parts of the town centres. The study also indicates that this approach would only be suitable for Hitchin, Letchworth and Royston, but not for Baldock which is too small. • This option might have a positive impact on the key sustainability issue of providing more affordable housing. <p>Recommendations for changes to this option</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify if this option would be applied to all 4 towns or if Baldock would be excluded.

<p>Option (c) Resist the loss of shops anywhere within the town centres. <i>Note: This option reflects the approach taken in the current plan, and therefore represents business as usual.</i></p>
<p>Conclusions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This option is likely to have an adverse impact on the key sustainability issues of providing more affordable housing, and may have an adverse impact on the key sustainability issues of reducing car use and greenhouse gas emissions. • It will also have a very severe adverse impact on the vitality and viability of town centres. • It is likely to have an adverse impact on the historic environment, access to facilities and services in town centres, and opportunities to support improved community cohesion. <p>Recommendations for changes to this option</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None.

5.2 Other uses in town centres

Option (a) Include policies encouraging new residential uses in town centres and resisting the loss of existing residential uses.

Note: This and option (c) reflects the approach taken in the current plan, and therefore represents business as usual.

Conclusions

- This option would have a positive impact on the key sustainability issues of achieving more sustainable location patterns, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and reducing the pressure for greenfield developments with consequent damage to landscapes.
- It would also promote more sustainable urban living and reduce traffic related pollution.
- This option is unlikely to have any adverse sustainability impacts.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- None.

Option (b) Include policies requiring large town centre developments to contain a mix of uses.

Conclusions

- This option is likely to have very similar impact to option 5.2(a). It will also help to ensure that a range of services and facilities to meet the needs of all of the community will be available in town centres. However, the extent of the impact will depend on the number and size of large town centre developments.
- It is unlikely to have any adverse sustainability impacts.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- None.

Option (c) Allow market forces to determine the mix of uses.

Note: This and option (a) reflects the approach taken in the current plan, and therefore represents business as usual.

Conclusions

- It is very difficult to predict the impact of this option, because this will depend on the mix of uses that result from market forces.
- However, there is no guarantee that this option will support the key sustainability issues of: minimising development on greenfield land, protecting landscapes, delivering more sustainable location patterns, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, providing town centre services and facilities that meet the needs of all members of the community.
- There is also no guarantee that this option would promote sustainable urban living.

Recommendations for changes to this option

None.

5.3 How to promote the health and well being of the smaller centres

Option (a) Let market forces determine the mix of uses in smaller centres.

Note: This option reflects the approach taken in the current plan, and therefore represents business as usual.

Conclusions

- It is very difficult to predict the impact of this option because it is impossible to be certain what mix of uses would result in smaller centres as a result of market forces.

There is no data available on the level of demand and types of other uses that might wish to locate in smaller centres.

- However, there is a possibility that this option would have an adverse impact on the key sustainability issues of reducing car transport and greenhouse gas emissions, and providing access to village services.
- But this option may have a positive impact on the key sustainability issues of reducing greenfield development, and thus protect landscapes.
- This option may also weaken the viability of the district's four town centres.

Recommendations for changes to this option and need for additional information

- More information is needed on the demand for uses in the smaller centres, and how this impacts on the four towns.
- No changes recommended at this stage.

Option (b) Allow the loss of shops and services where it can be shown that there is no longer a demand for the unit.

Conclusions

- This option would support several key sustainability issues by allowing the provision of more affordable housing and other uses in villages without resorting to edge of town developments, and thus would also help to reduce greenfield developments and protect landscapes. These benefits would only occur if there are vacant units in smaller centres.
- It is very difficult to predict the other impacts of this option because it is impossible to be certain what kind of other uses, if any, would occupy vacant units in smaller centres. There is no data available on the level of demand and types of other uses that might wish to locate in smaller centres.
- However, there is a possibility that this option would have an adverse impact on the key sustainability issues of reducing car transport and greenhouse gas emissions and in the longer term providing improved access to village services and facilities.
- This option may also weaken the viability of the district's four town centres.

Recommendations for changes to this option and new data needed

- Provide information on the current level of vacancies among units in smaller centres.
- No changes recommended at this stage.

Option (c) Resist the loss of any shops or services to other uses.

Conclusions

- This option would have a positive impact on the key sustainability issues of reducing car transport and greenhouse gas emissions and supporting access to village services and facilities.
- It would have an adverse impact on several key sustainability issues. It would restrict the conversion of vacant units to affordable housing and other uses in villages. This could restrict the development of rural tourism facilities and also result in greater pressure for edge of town developments which would lead to more greenfield developments and damage to landscapes.
- It could result in empty units in smaller centres with a consequent adverse impact on the historic environment and the fear of crime. But this depends on the level of demand for retail and other facilities in smaller centres. Data is not available on the current extent of vacant units in local centres.

Recommendations for changes to this option and new data needed

- Provide information on the current level of vacancies among units in smaller centres.

5.4 Should all the smaller centres be treated the same?

Option (a) All planning applications within the smaller centres should be assessed in the same way.

NB. *We have assumed for this option that all planning applications within the smaller centres would be assessed under one of options 5.2.2 (a), (b) or (c).*

Conclusions and recommendations

- We have assumed for this option that all planning applications within the smaller centres would be assessed according to whichever of options 5.2.2 (a), (b) or (c) are applied to smaller centres.
- Therefore the conclusions and recommendations from 5.2.2 (a), (b) or (c) will apply, depending on which option is followed for all smaller centres.

Option (b) Different policy approaches should be taken for larger villages, neighbourhood centres, small villages and individual shops.

NB. *We have assumed for this option that resistance to the loss of shops and other uses will be increased the fewer the facilities that are available in the centre.*

Conclusions

- Unsurprisingly, the impact of this option would be mixed, tending to have the reverse effect in larger villages with more facilities when compared with small villages with few facilities.
- Most significantly this option will help to retain some facilities in small villages with very few facilities, but only if there is sufficient local demand to retain these facilities. Alternatively the option could result in properties standing empty in small villages, with the consequent adverse impact on the historic environment. It is difficult to predict which is more likely without more information on the extent of vacant units in smaller villages.
- This option could also restrict opportunities for more affordable housing in smaller villages, or force more new developments out to the edge of villages, with a consequent adverse impact on loss of greenfield land and landscapes.

Recommendations for changes to this option and new data needed

- Provide information on the current level of vacancies among units in small villages with few facilities.

Option (d) No formal policy.

Note: We have assumed for this option that the absence of a formal policy will mean that all planning applications to smaller centres will be treated in the same way and that market forces will determine the mix of uses. Therefore the impacts of this option will be the same as for 5.3(a). This option reflects the approach taken in the current plan, and therefore represents business as usual.

	What is predicted effect of the option on each SA objective?	Explanation and suggestions for how the option could be made more compatible with the SA objectives.
Conclusions and recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is very difficult to predict the impact of this option because it is impossible to be certain what mix of uses would result in smaller centres as a result of market forces. There is no data available on the level of demand and types of other uses that might wish to locate in smaller centres. • However, there is a possibility that this option would have an adverse impact on the 		

key sustainability issues of reducing car transport and greenhouse gas emissions, and providing access to village services.

- But this option may have a positive impact on the key sustainability issues of reducing greenfield development, and thus protect landscapes.
- This option may also weaken the viability of the district's four town centres.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- None.

5.5 Should we promote the 'evening economy' in the four main towns, and if so how?

Option (a) Let market forces determine the level and mix of 'evening' uses in the town centres.

Note: This option reflects the approach taken in the current plan, and therefore represents business as usual.

Conclusions

- It is difficult to predict the impact of this option because the mix of uses that would result from market forces is uncertain.
- If this option results in a further concentration of licensed premises and less alternative evening entertainment it may have an adverse impact on the key sustainability issues reducing car journeys, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and reducing crime.
- Market forces are likely to be most successful in supporting the local economy, but are unlikely to provide more high quality employment in the district.
- Reliance on market forces may fail to provide a mix of evening entertainment to meet the needs of all sectors of the community, although surveys do not reveal a high level of dissatisfaction with current provision.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- None.

Option (b) Try to promote more varied activities in the town centre.

NB. We have assumed for this option that the aim will be to promote more activities such as cinemas, theatres, bowling, bingo, and health clubs, but not to place any constraints on the growth in pubs and clubs.

Conclusions

- We have assumed for this option that the aim will be to promote more activities such as cinemas, theatres, bowling, bingo, and health clubs, but not to place any constraints on the growth in pubs and clubs.
- It is difficult to predict the impact of this option because there is no certainty that a more varied mix of evening facilities would result. The North Herts Town Centre and Retail Study (TCRS) concluded that the district would be capable of supporting new and more varied leisure uses, but there is no guarantee that operators will provide these given their availability in neighbouring districts.
- If this option succeeds in attracting a more varied range of operators, it could have a positive impact on the key sustainability issues of reducing car journeys and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, since it is aimed at town centre use.

- If this option succeeds in attracting a more varied range of operators into the district, it should have a positive impact on meeting the evening entertainment needs of a wider cross-section of the community and promoting sustainable urban living. However, surveys do not indicate a high level of dissatisfaction with the current provision.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- None.

Option (c) Try to restrict further development of pubs and clubs in the town centre to discourage more alcohol related uses.

Conclusions

- This option would guarantee a limit or slower growth of pubs and clubs, and this should have a positive impact on limiting the growth in town centre street crime, which is considered a key sustainability issue.
- It is unlikely to have a severely adverse impact on the vitality of town centres or access to facilities because surveys have revealed only a small minority of residents think that there are not enough pubs and bars in the 4 towns.
- This option would result in a loss of some potential employment opportunities in new pubs and clubs, but these generally do not provide more high quality employment – the need for which was identified as a key sustainability issue.

Recommendations for changes to this option

- None.

6. Transport

6.1 Encouraging alternative modes and reducing car use

Option (a) Ensure that developers make adequate provision for non-car modes; public transport, cycling and walking.

Conclusions

- This option will have a positive impact on reducing car use and the associated pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Impacts will depend on ensuring that the provision is ongoing (ie not short-term service support, but provision of facilities or infrastructure or self-sustaining service) and is combined with a programme of promotion and publicity. Does not mention car-share clubs, but these have a potential to reduce car use, and can work well with new housing developments.
- By improving public transport, it will make services and facilities more accessible to those without a car, and contribute to community cohesion by making it easier for those without a car, particularly young and older people to remain living there. It will also contribute to sustainable tourism.
- By promoting walking and cycling, it will increase access to green spaces, improve health and increase recreational opportunities.

Recommendations for changes to this option:

- Require provision to be developed in a way that will last in the long-term.
- Re-word to encompass the development of car share clubs: by saying “adequate provision for modes which reduce car use: public transport, cycling and walking and

car-share clubs"

Option (b) Require all new developments to make a contribution towards improving local transport infrastructure

Conclusions

- The impacts of this option depends whether provision is for road infrastructure or not. Clearly there may be a need for additional road infrastructure for some new developments, but the emphasis should be on modes which reduce car use, and improve public transport. This would contribute to sustainable tourism, and reduce car use and the associated pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.
- If the provision is to improve public transport, it will make services and facilities more accessible to those without a car, and contribute to community cohesion by making it easier for those without a car, particularly young and older people to remain living there. It will also contribute to sustainable tourism.
- If the provision is to promote walking and cycling, it will increase access to green spaces, improve health and increase recreational opportunities.

Recommendations for changes to this option:

- Give priority to infrastructure for modes which reduce car use.

Option (c) Introduce car parking standards that are compatible with the location in line with maximum standards

Note: This option reflects the approach taken in the current plan, and therefore represents business as usual.

Conclusions

- It is assumed that this option means that there will be a maximum amount of parking provision within a development, which will be related to the ease of accessing public transport. If this is the case, it should make some contribution to encouraging increased public transport use, and reducing car use with its impacts on pollution and greenhouse gas emission. This is certainly a step in the right direction, and may have a positive affect on employment sites with good public transport. However, for residential sites, it is suggested that they are unlikely to have much affect unless the standards are very strict and linked with very good public transport, or other possibilities such as car-share clubs. It is suggested that a more proactive approach is needed, for example, by promoting car-free developments which link with good public transport, and a car share club.

Recommendations for changes to this option:

- Make the option more proactive by retaining restrictions on car use, but promoting low-car or no-car developments

Option (d) Make sure large developments make provision for improved and integrated transport infrastructure

Conclusions

- The impacts of this option depends whether provision is for road infrastructure or not. Clearly there may be a need for additional road infrastructure for some new developments, but the emphasis should be on modes which reduce car use, and improve public transport. This would contribute to sustainable tourism, and reduce car use and the associated pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.
- If the provision is to improve public transport, it will make services and facilities more accessible to those without a car, and contribute to community cohesion by making it easier for those without a car, particularly young and older people to remain living

there. It will also contribute to sustainable tourism.

- If the provision is to promote walking and cycling, it will increase access to green spaces, improve health and increase recreational opportunities.

Recommendations for changes to this option:

- Give priority to infrastructure for modes which reduce car use.

Option (e) Require Green Travel plans to be prepared for new or extended large employment sites.

Conclusions

- Green Travel plans would include a number of ways of reducing car use by employees, including car share, promoting public transport and reduction of parking spaces. This would option would therefore have a positive impact on promoting sustainable tourism, reducing car use and the associated pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.
- The Travel Plans could make local public transport services more viable, and therefore make services and facilities more accessible to those without a car and contribute to community cohesion by making it easier for those without a car, particularly young and older people to remain living there.
- The Travel Plans could also promote walking and cycling and improve health and increase recreational opportunities.

Recommendations for changes to this option:

- None

6.2 Park and ride

Option (a) Investigate whether park and ride is feasible for any of the North Herts towns, and if so, include policies to establish it in the LDF.

Conclusions

- This option is likely to promote rather than reduce car use, and increase greenhouse gas emissions, as it will make it easier to drive from one town to the next. Park and Ride would reduce traffic congestion, noise and air pollution in towns, but car use is a more significant sustainability issue. 60% of residents currently drive a car or van to work, with an average journey of 15 miles to work and a similar distance for leisure journeys. This option therefore would work against the North Herts targets to: reduce the distance travelled per person by 5% by 2021; reduce the car use modal share from 72.07% to 65.5% by 2021.

Recommendations for changes to this option:

- Require the investigation to research the overall impact on car use

Option (b) Do not pursue park and ride schemes

Note: This option reflects the approach taken in the current plan, and therefore represents business as usual.

Conclusions

- This option is likely to have a positive impact on reduction of car use, and associated greenhouse gas emissions, as it would prevent Park and Ride schemes making it easier to drive from one town to the next. It would miss the opportunity that Park and Ride presents to reduce traffic congestion, noise and air pollution in towns, but car use is a more significant sustainability issue. 60% of residents currently drive a car or van to work, with an average journey of 15 miles to work and a similar

distance for leisure journeys.

Recommendations for changes to this option:

- None

7. Leisure and community facilities

7.1 How should we secure adequate provision of sports pitches and sports facilities in the District?

Option (a) Concentrate on the retention, enhancement and improvement of existing pitches and sports pavilions across the District.

Conclusions

- This option will have a positive impact on the key sustainability issues of protecting green space.
- It will have an adverse impact on the key sustainability issues of access to recreational facilities.
- It would have a mixed impact on healthy lifestyles. In areas which already have facilities, enhanced provision is likely to encourage people to take more exercise. But this option would restrict access to healthy lifestyles in areas with a deficiency in sports facilities.

Recommendations for changes to this option and new data needs

- No change recommended for this option.
- Data on the proportion and location of the population with poor access to pitches and other sports facilities.

Option (b) Concentrate on meeting the identified deficiencies of sports facilities in particular locations.

Conclusions

- This option will have a positive impact on the key sustainability issues of improving access to facilities, reducing car journeys and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- Depending on the size and location of facilities, it could result in an adverse impact on the key sustainability issues of loss of greenfield land and biodiversity.
- It would support healthy lifestyles and sustainable urban living.

Recommendations for changes to this option and new data needs

- No changes recommended for this option.
- Data on the proportion and location of the population with poor access to pitches and other sports facilities.

Option (c) Seek contributions from developers to provide or improve sports facilities.

Conclusions

- This option will have a positive impact on the key sustainability issues of improving access to facilities, reducing car journeys and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- Depending on the size and location of facilities, it could result in an adverse impact on the key sustainability issues of loss of greenfield land and biodiversity.
- It would also support healthy lifestyles.

- It may deter commercial and residential developments if developers felt that requests for contributions were excessive. This would depend on the size of contribution requested and the economic viability of new developments in the district.

Recommendations for changes to this option and new data needs

- No change recommended to option.
- An analysis of whether or not development in the district has been deterred by requests for contributions to facilities would improve understanding of the impact of this option on commercial and residential developments.

Option (e) No formal policy on this issue.

NB. This reflects the approach taken in the current plan, and therefore represents the "business as usual" option.

Conclusions

- This option could have adverse impacts on a number of key sustainability issues: access to greenspace; reducing car journeys (with knock on effects on pollution and greenhouse gas emissions; and access to facilities.
- It would also have an adverse impact on health lifestyles and sustainable urban living.
- There are no positive sustainability impacts from this option.

Recommendations for changes to this option and new data needs

- No changes recommended for this option.
- Data on the proportion and location of the population with poor access to pitches and other sports facilities.

7.2 Should developers contribute more towards community facilities and services?

Option (a) Seek to retain the current level of social and community facilities in the District.

Conclusions

- This option will have a positive impact on the key sustainability issues of access to services and facilities and reducing car journeys (with knock on effects on pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.
- It will also have a positive impact on promoting community cohesion, participation in life-long learning and sustainable urban living.
- There are no negative sustainability impacts from this option.

Recommendations for changes to this option and new data needs

- No change recommended for this option.
- Data on the proportion and location of the population with poor access to social and community facilities.

Option (b) Seek to improve existing facilities *and* encourage the provision of new community facilities where new development takes place.

Note: We have replaced "or" with "and" and removed "either" from this option to clarify what is proposed. We have also assumed that developer would be asked to contribute

towards improved or new facilities.

This option reflects the approach taken in the current plan, and therefore represents the "business as usual" option.

Conclusions

- This option will have a positive impact on the key sustainability issues of access to services and facilities and reducing car journeys (with knock on effects on pollution and greenhouse gas emissions).
- It will also have a positive impact on promoting community cohesion, participation in life-long learning and sustainable urban living.
- It may deter commercial and residential developments if developers felt that requests for contributions were excessive. This would depend on the size of contribution requested and the economic viability of new developments in the district.

Recommendations for changes to this option and new data needs

- No change recommended to option.
- An analysis of whether or not development in the district has been deterred by requests for contributions to facilities would improve understanding of the impact of this option on commercial and residential developments.

Option (c) Seek contributions from developers to provide or improve community facilities.

Conclusions

- This option will have a positive impact on the key sustainability issues of access to services and facilities and reducing car journeys (with knock on effects on pollution and greenhouse gas emissions).
- It will also have a positive impact on promoting community cohesion, participation in life-long learning and sustainable urban living.
- It may deter commercial and residential developments if developers felt that requests for contributions were excessive. This would depend on the size of contribution requested and the economic viability of new developments in the district.

Recommendations for changes to this option and new data needs

- It is not clear how this option differs from option 7.2(b). We recommend that it is rephrased in order to clarify the distinction between these two options.
- An analysis of whether or not development in the district has been deterred by requests for contributions to facilities would improve understanding of the impact of this option on commercial and residential developments.