



**Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic
Environmental Assessment of the
Land Allocations Development Plan
Document**

Scoping Report

October 2007

Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment of the North Hertfordshire Land Allocations DPD

Scoping Report

A report by North Hertfordshire District Council

October 2007

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(Urdu)

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1. Introduction

1.1 What this report is for and how it was developed

This report is a formal requirement of the Sustainability Appraisal and SEA process. It is an opportunity to comment on the scope and methods used in the appraisal.

It covers the Land Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD).

A draft of this report was circulated to a wide range of consultees, who were given five weeks to comment on the document. As a result of the comments made, a number of changes were made to this final version of the report.

Background

Strategic Environmental Appraisal (SEA) is a process of identifying and evaluating the environmental impacts of a plan or programme. In 2001, the EU adopted Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (referred to as the 'SEA Directive' in this report).

The Directive came into force in the UK on 21 July 2004 and applies to a range of English plans and programmes including Local Development Frameworks (LDFs). In North Hertfordshire, the LDF will replace the existing Local Plan.

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) extends the concept of SEA to include economic and social concerns. Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, Local Authorities must undertake SA for each of their Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) – the constituent parts of the LDF. SA is therefore a statutory requirement for LDFs along with SEA.

The Government has published Guidance¹ (referred to as "the Guidance" in this report) on undertaking SA of the LDFs. The approach in the Guidance is to incorporate the requirements of the SEA Directive into a wider Sustainability Appraisal process.

¹ *Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks*
November 2005 ODPM

What is Sustainability Appraisal?

Sustainability appraisal is a systematic and iterative appraisal process, incorporating the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive. The main purpose of sustainability appraisal is to appraise the social, environmental and economic effects of plan strategies and policies, from the outset of the preparation process, so that decisions can be made that accord with the objectives of sustainable development.

Planning Policy Statement 12 – Local Development Frameworks

The aim of Sustainability Appraisal is to make sure that plans are doing as much as they can to support the delivery of social, economic and environmental objectives at the same time. Although planning authorities do their best to address these issues, it is easy to miss opportunities for better supporting social, economic and environmental objectives, and for reducing any conflicts. Sustainability Appraisal offers a systematic way for checking and improving on plans as they are being developed.

Ideally, as a result of the appraisal, conflicts with sustainability objectives will be removed, but this is not always possible. The conflicts and the decisions made must be explained in reports on the SA, and in consultations on the plan. As a result the public and other stakeholders will find it easier to appreciate the pros and cons of the plan and to make up their own minds about whether the planning authority has made the right decisions.

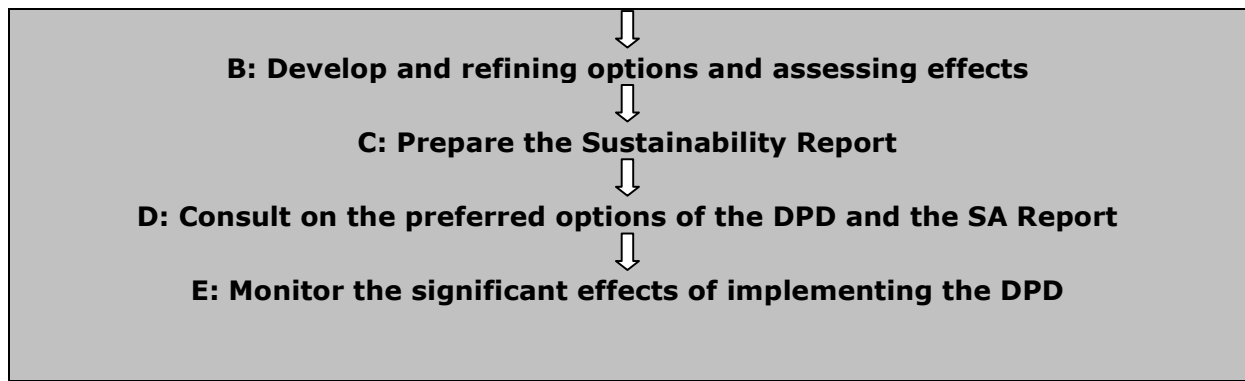
The Five Stages of Appraisal

The national planning guidance on preparing Local Development Frameworks (PPS12) says that *to be effective sustainability appraisal should be fully integrated into the plan-making process. It should be started as soon as a new or revised local development document is first considered, and should provide input at each stage when decisions are taken.*

There are five stages (A to E) to the Appraisal, shown in the box below. The stages follow those indicated in the ODPM Interim Advice.

THE FIVE STAGES OF SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

A: Set the context and objectives, establish the baseline and decide on the scope



The Guidance outlines the following steps to the first two parts of the process.

Stage A: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope
<p>A1. Identify and review other relevant plans, programmes and policies, and sustainable development objectives that will affect or influence the DPD. (Context Review)</p> <p>A2. Collect relevant social, environmental and economic baseline information and produce a characterisation of North Hertfordshire (Baseline)</p> <p>A3. Identify key sustainability issues for the SA to address.</p> <p>A4. Develop the SA framework, consisting of the sustainability objectives, indicators and targets.</p> <p>A5. Produce a Scoping Report and consult relevant authorities, the public and other key stakeholders on the scope of the appraisal and the key issues and possible options for solutions.</p>
Stage B: Appraise options and the draft plan
<p>B1. Test the DPD objectives against the SA framework.</p> <p>B2. Develop the DPD options</p> <p>B3. Predict the effects of the draft DPD (preferred options) against the sustainability objectives using any available research information</p> <p>B4. Evaluate the effects of the draft DPD</p> <p>B5. Consider ways of mitigating adverse effects and maximising beneficial</p>

effects of the draft DPD

B6. Develop proposals for **monitoring** the significant effects of implementing the DPD.

Appraising the Land Allocations Development Plan Document

The process to be followed

North Hertfordshire is in the process of developing its LDF. It has published the Local Development Scheme which describes the documents that will make up the LDF and when they will be developed. One of those documents is the Land Allocations DPD, which is the subject of this SA. The SA will follow the process laid out in the ODPM's Guidance. This process also meets the requirements of the SEA Directive.

The LDF is required to conform to the East of England Plan which is the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). A SEA and SA has already been undertaken of the RSS, and the results of the appraisal of the RSS have been used where appropriate, to inform this appraisal.

There are two formal documents required:

1. The Scoping Report
2. The Sustainability Appraisal Report

The Scoping Report is the formal report on the first part (Stage A) of the process. It gives an overview of the scope of the appraisal process. It must also include the objectives of the plans to be appraised, the broad strategic options which will be considered, and the methodology that will be used. This report is the scoping report for the Land Allocations DPD.

The Sustainability Appraisal Report will also meet the requirements of the SEA Directive to produce an Environmental Report. This report will describe the results of the second part of the appraisal process (Stage B, shown in the table on the previous page). It will include a non-technical summary, a summary of the results of each element of the appraisal process (including information on Stage A, amended to respond to consultation comments) and proposals for monitoring the impacts of the plan. The testing matrices from Stages B1 –B5 will be made available in separate technical appendices.

The level of detail will be appropriate to an appraisal of a local plan. This means that each allocation within the relevant LDD will be tested in order to assess its significant environmental and sustainability impacts within the District. Of course some of these impacts, for example climate change, will relate to a wider area than just the District itself. A list of the contents of the SA report is shown in the table below.

Contents of the Sustainability Appraisal Report
<p>1. Summary and outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-technical summary • Statement on the difference the process has made • How to comment on the report
<p>2. Appraisal Methodology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach adopted to the SA • When the SA was carried out • Who carried out the SA • Who was consulted, when and how
<p>3. Background</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose of the SA and the SA Report • Plan objectives and outline of contents • Compliance with the SEA Directive/Regulations (Table sign-posting the components of the SA Report which make up the Environmental Report for the purposes of the SEA Directive)
<p>4. Sustainability objectives, baseline and context</p> <p>This section will be the information in the Scoping Report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links to other strategies, plans and programmes and sustainability objectives • Description of the social, environmental and economic baseline characteristics and the predicted future baseline (i.e. trend information, where it is available) • Difficulties in collecting data and limitations of the data • The SA framework, including objectives, targets and indicators • Main social, environmental and economic issues and problems identified
<p>5. Plan issues and options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main strategic options considered and how they were identified • Comparison of the social, environmental and economic effects of the options (summary of testing matrices) • How social, environmental and economic issues were considered in choosing the preferred options • Other options considered, and why these were rejected • Proposed mitigation measures (summary of testing matrices)
<p>6. Land allocations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant social, environmental and economic effects of the preferred sites (summary of the information in the matrices) • How social, environmental and economic problems were considered in developing the preferred sites • Proposed mitigation measures (summary of the information in the matrices) • Uncertainties and risks (summary of the information in the matrices relating to limitations in the assessment arising out of lack of information)

7. Implementation

- Implementation mechanisms such as design requirements, EIA
- Proposals for monitoring

In addition, an interim report on the results of the appraisal of the options (stage B2) will be produced and made available as part of the consultation on the issues and options. This report will include a non-technical summary and a summary of the results of the appraisal of options. The testing matrices will be made available in a separate technical appendix.

Local Development Document to be appraised

This Appraisal will cover the following LDD:

The Land Allocations, which will specify sites to meet the District's needs for housing, employment, retail, leisure, community facilities and any other uses considered necessary.

Strategic Objectives for the LDD

A number of documents have already been written with high level objectives for the Council's work. The Corporate Plan contains a 'vision' for the District and six strategic objectives to achieve this. This vision and the strategic objectives will apply to the two LDDs.

The Council's vision for the District is: *"Making North Hertfordshire a vibrant place to live, work and prosper."*

The strategic objectives used in the Land Allocations DPD are the same as those used in the Core Strategy and Development Policies DPDs. They are as follows:

Managing environments

SO/A. Minimise our contribution to climate change and adapt to the changing climate.

- SO/B. Ensure that changes protect or enhance the existing natural and man-made environments for their own sake and for the benefit of future generations.
- SO/C. Secure high quality design which reflects and responds to local context and distinctiveness.
- SO/D. Ensure that natural resources are used efficiently and waste is minimised.

Meeting housing and transport needs

- SO/E. To meet the housing needs of all the community by providing an adequate amount and range of housing including affordable and special needs housing.
- SO/F. To direct housing growth to appropriate and sustainable locations.
- SO/G. Influence the type and location of development so as to reduce the need to travel and promote alternative modes of travel to the private car.

Healthy communities

- SO/H. Encourage opportunities for cultural activities, recreation and sport across the district.

Prosperous communities

- SO/I. Protect, promote and enhance the town and local centres.
- SO/J. Provide for employment opportunities in the district, encouraging a diversified economy.

Delivery

- SO/K. Ensure there are adequate facilities and infrastructure to support new and existing communities.

Strategic Options for the LDDs

In its Issues and Options of the Core Strategy and Development Policies, the Council set out strategic options. These were assessed during the SA/SEA process on those documents. In developing this Land Allocations DPD, the next level of options will be those proposed allocated sites themselves.

Context Review

Stage A1. Identify and review other relevant plans, programmes and policies, and sustainable development objectives that will affect or influence the DPD.

Purpose of the Context Review

The Context review is Stage A1 of the process outlined in the ODPM's Guidance on sustainability appraisal. The Guidance explains that²:

A plan may be influenced in various ways by other plans or programmes and sustainability objectives, such as those laid down in policies or legislation. These relationships should be explored to:

- *identify any external social, environmental or economic objectives that should be reflected in the SA process;*
- *identify external factors, such as sustainability issues, that might influence the preparation of the plan; and*
- *determine whether the policies in other plans and programmes might lead to cumulative effects when combined with policies in the plan that is subject to the SA.*

The Context review meets the requirements of the SEA Directive to provide *an outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes*³

Review of Plans Programmes and Policies relevant to North Hertfordshire

Relevant documents at international, national, regional and local level have been reviewed. For each document the following information has been collated where available and appropriate:

² Annex 1

³ Annex 1(a)

- Key objectives relevant to the LDDs and SA
- Key targets and indicators relevant to the LDDs and SA
- Implications for the LDDs
- Implications for SA

This information has been used to inform the subsequent stages of the process, which are covered in later sections of this document.

- Identification of sustainability issues (stage A3)
- Development of SA framework (stage A4)
- Baseline review (stage A2)

The LDF is required to conform to the East of England Plan which is the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). Therefore the RSS is a key document that informs the context of the LDF and this appraisal. One implication is that when the RSS is finalised, it may mean that policies and proposals in the RSS prohibit some of the options proposed by the District Council. Nevertheless, at this stage it is still necessary to appraise all the suggested options.

A SEA and SA has already been undertaken of the RSS, and of the Hertfordshire LTP. These have also been included in the list of strategies reviewed and where appropriate, have informed this appraisal.

The documents reviewed are listed in the table overleaf. The full review is included as Appendix 1 to this report.

Plan, Programme or Policy
European
EU Sustainable Development Strategy (May 2001)
EU Spatial Development Perspective (May 1999)
EU Sixth Environmental Action Plan (July 2002)
EU Biodiversity Strategy (Feb 1998)
EU Water Framework Directive
National
UK Sustainable Development Strategy 2005
Sustainable communities: building for the future (OMDP Feb 2003)
Working with the Grain of Nature – A Biodiversity Strategy For England (DEFRA 2002)
PPG2: Greenbelt (1992)
PPS3: Housing (2006)

PPG4: Industrial, Commercial Development and Small Firms (2001)
PPG8: Telecommunications (2001)
PPG10: Planning and Waste Management (1999)
PPG13: Transport (2001)
PPG15: Planning and the Historic Environment (2001)
PPG16: Archaeology and Planning (2001)
PPG17: Planning for Sport, Open Space and Recreation (1991)
PPG24: Planning and Noise (1994)
PPS25: Development and Flood Risk (2006)
PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development (2005)
Draft Supplement to PPS1 - Planning and Climate Change (CLG, 2006)
PPS6: Planning for Town Centres (2005)
PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (2004)
PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (2005)
PPS10: Planning for Sustainable Waste Management (2005)
PPS12: Local Development Frameworks, (2004)
PPS22: Renewable Energy (2004)
PPS23: Planning and Pollution Control (2004)
The Future of Transport White Paper (DETR, July 2004)
UK Air Quality Strategy (2000)
The Air Quality Strategy: Addendum (Defra 2003)
UK Climate Change Programme (2000)
Energy White Paper: Our energy future – creating a low carbon economy (Dti 2003)
The UK Fuel Poverty Strategy (2001)
UK Waste Strategy (Defra 2000)
Rural Strategy (2004)
Saving Lives: Our Healthier Nation White Paper (DoH 1999)
The Energy Challenge: Energy Review Report (DTI 2006)
Planning for a Sustainable Future - White Paper (CLG, May 2007)
Regional
East of England Plan: Draft revision to the RSS for the East of England (Dec 2004), Panel Report (June 2006), Secretary of State’s Proposed Changes (Dec 2007)
East of England Plan: Sustainability Appraisal Report (November 2004)
Sustainable Futures: The Integrated Regional Strategy for the East of England (Feb 2005)
A Sustainable Development Framework for the East of England (Oct 2001)
Our Environment, Our Future: The Regional Environmental Strategy for the East of England (July 2003)
Revised regional housing strategy 2005-2010
Regional Social Strategy: A strategy to achieve a fair and inclusive society in the East of England (March 2004)
A Shared Vision: The regional economic strategy for the East of England (Nov 2004)
Living with climate change in the East of England (2003)
Water resources for the future – A strategy for Anglian Region (March 2001)
Creating Sustainable Communities In the East of England (ODPM 2005)
Towns and Cities – Strategy and Action Plan: Urban Renaissance in the East of England
Sub-Regional
A Housing Strategy for the London Commuter Belt Sub-region 2005 - 2008
Chilterns AONB Management Strategy – The Framework for Action 2002 – 2007
Anglian Water Resource Plan 2004

Our Plan for Water Supply to 2030 – Three Rivers Water
County
Hertfordshire Structure Plan 1991-2011
Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan 2006/7-2010-2011
SEA of Local Transport Plan 2006/7- 2010-2011
A 50 Year Vision for the Wildlife and Natural Habitats of Hertfordshire: BAP (1998)
The Hertfordshire Environmental Strategy (June 2001)
Hertfordshire Economic Development Strategy 2006-2011 (Jan 2006)
Hertfordshire Town Renaissance Campaign
Hertfordshire Waste Strategy
Hertfordshire Waste Local Plan 1995-2005 (1999)
Hertfordshire Sustainability Guide
The Hertfordshire minerals and waste development framework and scheme
Hertfordshire Minerals Local Plan Review
Enjoy! A cultural strategy for Hertfordshire
Rural Hertfordshire – and Agenda for Action 2001-2005
Rural Innovation Strategy – Hertfordshire Rural Forum (Apr 2003)
Hertfordshire Renewable Energy Study (Jan 2005)
Building Futures: A Hertfordshire Guide to Promoting Sustainability in Development (July 2006)
Local (District wide)
North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No.2 with Alterations
North Hertfordshire District Council Corporate Plan (2005)
North Hertfordshire Housing Strategy 2004-2007
North Hertfordshire Empty Homes Strategy
North Hertfordshire Homelessness Strategy 2004-2007
Home Energy Conservation Act (H.E.C.A) Progress Report
Biodiversity Action Plan
Rural Strategy for North Hertfordshire 2005-2010
Pavilions, Playing Fields and Sports Pitches Strategy
Play Area and Outdoor Youth Provision Strategy 2004-2010
Allotment Strategy 2004-2009
Community Strategy for North Hertfordshire
Community Safety Strategy
Social Inclusion Strategy
Health Improvement and Modernisation Programme
Contaminated Land Strategy
Northern Hertfordshire Area Transport Plan
North Hertfordshire District Council Car Parking Strategy
North Hertfordshire Cycling Strategy (1999) and North Hertfordshire Towns Cycle Network (2000)
Review of Voluntary Managed Community Centres and Village Halls
Supplementary Planning Document Vehicle Parking Provision at New Development
Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document
Sub-District
Hitchin Town Centre Strategy (2004)
Hitchin Transportation Plan (1998)
Draft Hitchin Town Centre Public Transport Strategy (Aug 2004)
Baldock Town Centre Strategy (Jan 2006)
Letchworth Garden City Town Centre Strategy (Jan 2007)

Royston Conservation Area Review (2007)
North Hertfordshire Urban Design Assessment – District Assessment/North Hertfordshire Urban Design Assessment – Royston (Draft Reports June 2007)

Sustainability Issues

Stage A3. Identify key sustainability issues for the SA to address.

Purpose of identifying sustainability issues

The Guidance comments that *the identification of sustainability problems is an opportunity to define key issues for the DPD⁴ and develop sustainable plan objectives and options.*

The identification of sustainability issues also provides useful information for the sustainability appraisal process itself. It will inform stage B of the process (not covered in this report) where options will be tested against the appraisal objectives. For example when testing options for sites in villages, information that *access to services for those in villages without a car* is a sustainability problem will inform the judgements made in the testing process and influence the choice of options.

The identification of sustainability issues meets the requirements of the SEA Directive to identify *any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance⁵.*

Key Sustainability Issues for North Hertfordshire

A list of issues was developed from the review of plans, programmes and policies. The list was then refined, based on discussions with the Officer Steering Group at a meeting on May 18th 2005, which included other sources of information. It was initially done for the appraisal of the Core Strategy and Development Policies DPDs. The revised list is shown in Appendix 2.

⁴ Development Plan Document

⁵ Annex 1(d)

Sustainability Appraisal Objectives

Stage A4 Develop the SA framework, consisting of the sustainability objectives, indicators and targets

Purpose of the SA Objectives

Sustainability Appraisal is an objectives-led process. This means that the potential impacts of a plan are tested against a series of objectives for sustainable development (e.g. an objective *to use resources efficiently*).

Along with their associated indicators and any targets (which are shown in the baseline review in Appendix 2), the objectives form the Appraisal Framework. The Guidance notes that particularly relevant sources for SA objectives include *the UK Sustainable Development Strategy, the Regional Sustainable Development Frameworks, and at the local level Community Strategies or Plans. Baseline information collected and sustainability issues identified at earlier stages in the SA can also be especially useful in identifying objectives and indicators*⁶.

The Guidance also comments that *planning authorities may also choose to include more detailed sub-objectives and related indicators in their SA Framework. Sub-objectives can help to ensure that all the key issues to be considered in the SA are incorporated in the SA Framework. An example of a sub-objective for resource efficiency could be reduce water use.*

It should be noted that the SA objectives are distinct from the objectives for the DPD itself, though they may in some cases overlap with them.

⁶ Annex 5

Developing objectives for appraising the North Hertfordshire Land Allocations DPD

An initial set of objectives and sub-objectives was produced by the consultants who appraised the Core Strategy and Development Policies DPDs, based on the following sources:

- Objectives used in the sustainability appraisal of the East of England Plan⁷. These were derived from objectives from the Sustainable Development Framework for the East of England.
- Priorities defined in the North Hertfordshire Community Strategy
- Information on issues and objectives from the context review and the baseline data
- The objectives have been cross-checked against the priorities in the UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy.⁸

It was then refined, based on discussions with the Officer Steering Group at a meeting on May 18th 2005. It has also been amended to for this DPD, given the particular nature of land allocations. The refined objectives are shown below. The objectives which address the issues which are required to be covered by the SEA Directive⁹ are shown underlined.

In particular specific issues have been excluded as they have already been addressed by the Core Strategy and Development Policies and are outside the scope of this DPD. They relate to the impacts of houses and other facilities built on the sites, including:

- Energy efficiency and energy use;
- Sustainable construction issues;
- Resource use;
- Waste management.

⁷ *East of England Plan: Sustainability Appraisal Report* Levett-Therival Sustainability Consultants and Land Use Consultants November 2004

⁸ *Securing the Future* March 2005

⁹ listed in Annex 1(f)

SA Objective¹⁰	SA Sub Objective: <i>will the allocation...</i>
ECONOMIC ACTIVITY	
1 Achieve sustainable levels of prosperity and economic growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encourage new business to start-up and thrive in the District? • support and encourage the rural economy and diversification? • improve the quality of local jobs available to people in the District?
LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS	
<u>2(a) Minimise the development of greenfield land and other land with high environmental and amenity value?</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be located on brownfield land? • be located on land of low environmental and amenity value? • avoid using the best and most versatile agricultural land? • reduce quantity of unremediated contaminated land?
<u>2(b) Provide access to green spaces</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be accessible to green spaces? • avoid reducing access to existing green and open spaces?
<u>2 (c) Deliver more sustainable location patterns and reduce the use of motor vehicles</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be accessible to key local services such as food shops, primary school and post office by walking and cycling? • be accessible to employment, education and training, shopping, healthcare and other services by walking, cycle, bus, and train? • avoid exacerbating local traffic congestion?
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION	
<u>3(a) Protect and enhance biodiversity</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protect habitats and species, especially those designated as being of importance, and provide opportunities for creation of new habitats?
<u>3(b) Protect and enhance landscapes</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protect and enhance landscapes, especially those of historic, recreational or amenity value, and within the Chilterns AONB?
<u>3(c) Conserve and where appropriate, enhance the historic environment</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conserve and enhance the historic built character of the District's town's and villages? • protect sites of archaeological and historic importance, whether designated or not?
<u>3(d) Reduce pollution from any source</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • protect the water quality of rivers ? • protect groundwater resources?

¹⁰ those relevant to the SEA Directive are shown underlined

	<i>Note that the air pollution impacts relating to the effect of site location on the need to travel are addressed by question 2(c) and therefore not repeated here. Noise impacts are addressed by question 5(c) and also no repeated here.</i>
CLIMATE CHANGE	
<u>4(a) Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve the District's ability to adapt to climate change</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • avoid development in areas at risk from flooding? <p><i>Note that the climate change impacts relating to the effect of site location on the need to travel are addressed by question 2(c) and therefore not repeated here.</i></p>
A JUST SOCIETY	
5(a) Share benefits of prosperity fairly and promote community cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contribute to regeneration of deprived areas (estates in Letchworth and Hitchin)? • recognise and value cultural and ethnic diversity ? • retain rural services, especially shops, post offices, schools, health centres and bus services?
5(b) Increase access to decent and affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase access to affordable housing, particularly for the young, the disabled and key workers?
<u>5(c) Improve conditions and services that engender good health and reduce health inequalities</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid increasing the level of nuisance, ambient noise or cumulative effect on quality of life on existing residential areas? • Be located away from ambient noise?
TOWN CENTRES	
6 Promote sustainable urban living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encourage wider range of shops and services in town centres? • encourage more people to live in town centres? • encourage synergy in land uses, which supports the continued and enhanced viability of a wide range of shops and services?

Baseline review

Stage A2. Collect relevant social, environmental and economic baseline information and produce a characterisation of North Hertfordshire

Purpose of baseline review

As its name implies the baseline review describes the current social, economic and environmental conditions in the District. The Guidance notes that *baseline information provides the basis for predicting and monitoring effects and helps to identify sustainability problems*

Collecting baseline information therefore contributes to the effectiveness of the appraisal. The aim is to collect information relating to each of the sustainability objectives. However, in reality there will be gaps in data availability. The Guidance notes that *where there are gaps, it is important to record any resulting uncertainties or risks in the appraisal. Provisions should also be made to fill any major gaps for future programmes or reviews.*

The baseline review meets the requirements of the SEA Directive to provide information on *the environmental characteristics of the area likely to be affected*¹¹.

The Baseline review for North Hertfordshire is included in Appendix 2. It includes a number of desirable indicators for which no data could be found.

¹¹ Annex1 (c)