

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Local Development Framework



# Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment - Scoping Report



North Hertfordshire Local  
Development Framework

Core Strategy and Development  
Control Policies

August  
2005

# **Sustainability Appraisal and SEA of North Hertfordshire LDF**

## **Scoping Report**

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

Written by: Gerard Couper and Laurie Newton  
Reviewed by: Joan Bennett

August 2005

CAG CONSULTANTS  
Gordon House  
6 Lissenden Gardens  
London NW5 1LX  
Tel/fax 020 7482 8882  
hq@cagconsult.co.uk  
[www.cagconsultants.co.uk](http://www.cagconsultants.co.uk)

If you have difficulty understanding this publication or English is not your first language, please contact the Council's Planning Policy and Projects on 01462 474234 and we will do our best to assist.

এই লেখাটি বুঝতে যদি আপনার অস্ববিধা হয় বা ইংরেজি যদি আপনার প্রধান ভাষা না হয়, তাহলে দয়া করে কাউন্সিলের প্ল্যানিং পলিসি অ্যান্ড প্রজেক্টস গ্রুপকে 01462 – 474234 নম্বরে টেলিফোন করুন। আমাদের যতদূর সাধ্য আমরা আপনাকে সাহায্য করার চেষ্টা করব।

**(Bengali)**

如果你對了解這刊物有困難，或你的母語不是英語，請與市議會的規劃政策及建設小組聯絡，電話：01462 – 474234，我們會儘力協助你。

**(Cantonese)**

Jeśli mają Państwo trudności ze zrozumieniem tej publikacji, albo jeśli angielski nie jest Państwa językiem ojczystym, prosimy o kontakt z Zespołem ds. Planowania i Projektów przy Radzie, pod numerem tel. 01462 – 474234, a my dołożymy wszelkich starań, aby Państwu udzielić pomocy.

**(Polish)**

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਛਪਾਈ ਸਮਝਣੀ ਔਖੀ ਲਗਦੀ ਹੈ ਜਾਂ ਅੰਗਰੇਜ਼ੀ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਪਹਿਲੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਨਹੀਂ, ਤਾਂ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕਰ ਕੇ ਕੌਂਸਿਲ ਦੇ ਪਲੈਨਿੰਗ ਪੌਲਿਸੀ ਐਂਡ ਪਰੋਜੈਕਟਸ ਗਰੁੱਪ ਨਾਲ ਨੰਬਰ 01462 – 474234 ਤੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ ਅਤੇ ਅਸੀਂ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਕਰਨ ਦਾ ਪੂਰਾ ਯਤਨ ਕਰਾਂ ਗੇ।

**(Punjabi)**

Se avete difficoltà a capire questo opuscolo oppure se l'inglese non é la vostra lingua matema, vi preghiamo di mettervi in contatto con il "Council's Planning Policy and Projects Group" (Gruppo per i Progetti e la Pianificazione del Consiglio), chiamando lo 01462 – 474234 e faremo del nostro meglio per aiutarvi.

**(Italian)**

Bu yayını anlamakta zorluk çekerseniz ya da İngilizce anadiliniz değilse, lütfen Belediyenin Planlama Dairesi ve Proje Ekibini 01462 – 474234 numaralı hattan arayın ve yardımcı olmak için gerekeni yapacağız.

**(Turkish)**

اگر آپ کو اس اشاعت کو سمجھنے میں دشواری ہو یا انگریزی آپ کی مادری زبان نہیں ہے تو برائے مہربانی کونسل کے پلاننگ پالیسی اور پراجیکٹ گروپ سے 01462 474234 پر رابطہ قائم کریں اور ہم آپ کی مدد کرنے کی پوری کوشش کریں گے۔

**(Urdu)**

# Contents

Introduction	1
<b>What this report is for and how it was developed</b>	1
<b>Background</b>	1
<b>What is Sustainability Appraisal?</b>	2
<b>The Five Stages of Appraisal</b>	2
Appraising the North Hertfordshire LDF	5
<b>The process to be followed</b>	5
<b>Local Development Documents to be appraised</b>	7
<b>Strategic Objectives for the LDDs</b>	7
<b>Strategic Options for the LDDs</b>	9
Context Review	12
<b>Purpose of the Context Review</b>	12
<b>Review of Plans Programmes and Policies relevant to North Hertfordshire</b>	12
Sustainability Issues	17
<b>Purpose of identifying sustainability issues</b>	17
<b>Key Sustainability Issues for North Hertfordshire</b>	17
Sustainability Appraisal Objectives	18
<b>Purpose of the SA Objectives</b>	18
<b>Developing objectives for appraising the North Hertfordshire LDF</b>	19
Baseline review	23
<b>Purpose of baseline review</b>	23
Appendix 1 Key Sustainability Issues	24
Appendix 2 Review of Plans, Programmes and Policies	
Appendix 3 Baseline Information	

# Introduction

## 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 following Local Development Documents: Core Strategy and Development Control Policies.

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 draft Guidance<sup>1</sup> (referred to as "the Guidance" in this report) on undertaking SA of the LDFs. This has been followed up by an Interim Advice

---

<sup>1</sup> *Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks*  
September 2004 ODPM

note<sup>2</sup> ("Interim Advice"). The approach in the Guidance is to incorporate the requirements of the SEA Directive into a wider Sustainability Appraisal process.

## 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

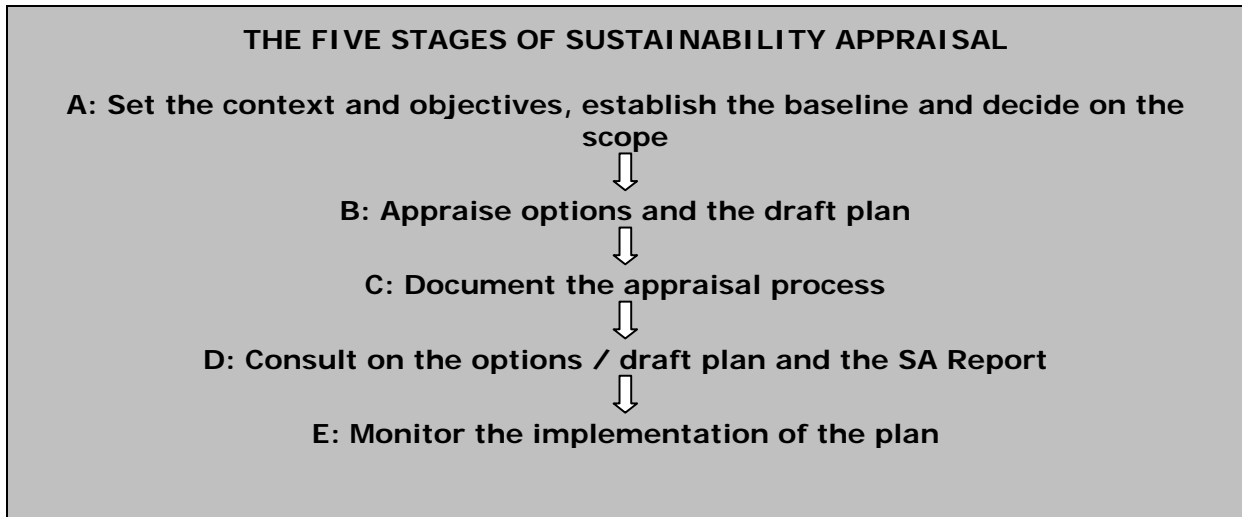
The national planning guidance on preparing Local Development Frameworks (PPS12) says that *to be effective sustainability appraisal should be fully integrated into the plan-making process. It should be started as soon as a new or revised local development*

---

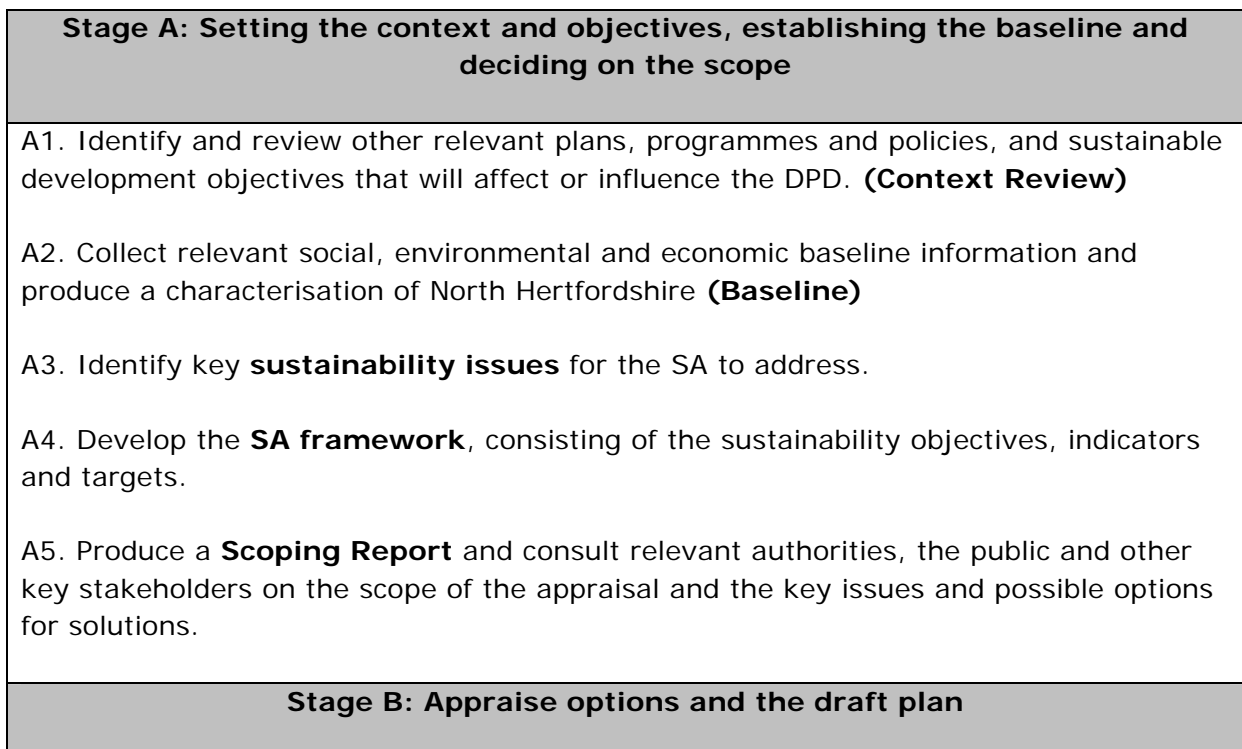
<sup>2</sup> *Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks: Interim advice note on frequently asked questions* April 2005 ODPM.

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 Guidance and Interim Advice outline the following steps to the first two parts of the process.



B1. **Test the DPD objectives** against the sustainability objectives and whether the DPD objectives are consistent with one another.

B2. **Appraise issues and options** against the sustainability objectives

B3. **Predict the effects of the draft plan (preferred options)** against the sustainability objectives using any available research information

B4. **Assess the effects of the draft plan** against the sustainability objectives

B5. **Improve the sustainability impact** of the draft plan

B6. **Appraise significant changes** just before, during and following examination

B7. Develop proposals for **monitoring**

# Appraising the North Hertfordshire LDF

## 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. The council has asked CAG Consultants to undertake the SA and SEA of the LDF on their behalf. The SA will follow the process laid out in the ODPM's Guidance as amended in the Interim Advice. This process also meets the requirements of the SEA Directive. The appraisal will be undertaken directly by the Consultants reporting to a Steering Group of officers from the District and County Council.

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 following Local Development Documents: Core Strategy and Development Control Policies

The Sustainability Appraisal Report will also meet the requirements of the SEA Directive to produce an Environmental Report. For each LDD, 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 policy 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.

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

- 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 Documents to be appraised**

This Appraisal will cover the following LDDs:

- The **Core Strategy, which** provides the guiding principles for development. This will include details on matters such as which towns or villages are considered suitable for future development, and the Council's approach to nature conservation and reuse of employment land for other uses. The Core Strategy will not identify individual pieces of land for development. When the Council is preparing the Land Allocations document, which will identify individual pieces of land, the Core Strategy will be the main determinant of which sites are identified.
- The **Development Control Policies Document** gives information on detailed matters such as the Council's approach to design, parking standards and open space requirements.

## **Strategic Objectives for the LDDs**

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 six objectives are:

**Sustainable Communities** Promoting sustainable development of the District to ensure we deliver adequate affordable housing, protect the environment and conserve the heritage of our historic towns and rural settlements.

**Safer Communities** Encouraging responsible citizenship and creating safe communities with less crime and less fear of crime.

**Healthier Communities** Promoting first class leisure and cultural facilities to contribute to healthy living for all of our citizens.

**Equal Communities** Targeting resources at areas of disadvantage in the District to reduce social exclusion and improve the quality of life for everyone.

**Prosperous Communities** Creating opportunity for all by promoting sustainable local economic development.

**Listening to You** Ensuring that we listen to our citizens and deliver high quality, value for money, customer focused services.

There are also a number of objectives identified in the **Community Strategy**, which was prepared with extensive public involvement in 2003. Those which will apply to the two LDDs are:

- Development of brownfield sites should be encouraged in order to preserve greenfield sites;
- All new housing developments to be provided with associated leisure, shopping and health facilities;
- Maintain parks and open green spaces within towns;
- More affordable housing;
- Provide affordable housing for families wanting to remain in rural area; and
- Support local post offices and other rural services such as mobile library and village shops.

## Strategic Options for the LDDs

The Council is in the process of developing detailed options for the Core Strategy and Development Control Policies. It plans to consult on these options through an Issues and Options report in September 2005. Subject to consultation comments on this Scoping Report, it is intended to include the following strategic options in the Issues and Options report.

### Rural areas and settlement pattern

In the current local plan 14 villages are identified as being able to accommodate some level of development: Ashwell, Barkway, Barley, Codicote, Holwell, Ickleford, Kimpton, Knebworth, Little Wymondley, Offley, Pirton, Sandon, Therfield and Whitwell.

The following options have been identified to decide which villages within the rural area might be able to accommodate development in the future:

Identify villages based on:

- a. The level of facilities in the village;
- b. The population of the village; or
- c. The desires of the parish councils and residents of each village.

### Housing

The draft East of England Plan currently proposes 15,800 new homes to be provided in the District over the period 2001-2021. While the Council estimates that approaching half of this may be met through previously developed sites coming forward and completions since 2001, there will also be a need to identify new sites for future greenfield development. Current indications are that 8,000 of the North Hertfordshire allocation will be located at the edge of Stevenage.

Tough decisions need to be made about the broad locations for change and development within the District. Sustainability is a big issue and should govern which settlements or areas would benefit from additional development and which should be protected. In the past, the Council has sought to protect the countryside and avoid unsustainable patterns of development. Current policy directs the majority of development towards the towns of Hitchin, Letchworth Garden City, Baldock and Royston.

The following options have been chosen for future housing provision:

- a. Continue current policy of focusing development on the four towns and fourteen villages, which may include limited development of greenfield sites;
- b. Only allow development of previously developed land within existing urban areas;
- c. Urban extensions on greenfield land adjoining existing towns;
- d. Build a new settlement on a greenfield site; and

- e. Use smaller greenfield sites in the villages.

At present, developers are required to provide a percentage of new dwellings on larger sites as affordable units. These are then paid for partly by subsidies from the Housing Corporation. However, the level of subsidy may not be adequate to fund the level of affordable housing sought.

Currently affordable houses in North Herts must be for 'local need', which does not allow for those in need from outside the District to qualify for the homes. The following options have therefore been identified for the provision of affordable housing:

- a. Continue with the present approach of negotiating for affordable housing at the rate identified in the current Local Plan.
- b. Increase the amount of affordable housing on large sites to a higher percentage
- c. Lower the threshold limit to include smaller sites where the economics of provision will allow.
- d. Introduce a lower threshold for the villages than the towns

## Employment

Most employment generating development (for B class uses such as offices, factories and warehouses etc) is within the Employment Areas of the four main towns. The towns have a number of Employment Areas of varying sizes.

Since the late 1990s, unemployment in the District has been at relatively low levels. It has been around the County average, lower than the regional figures and usually about half of the national figures. However, there is some variation across the District with higher than average levels in Hitchin and Letchworth Garden City, whilst Royston usually has one of the lowest levels of unemployment in the County.

Travel to work patterns are complex with movements in and out of the District, and between the towns within the District. The Council would like to reduce the amount of car-borne commuting in and out of the District, as well as within the District. The following options have therefore been identified for the future provision of employment land:

- a. No new Employment Areas should be designated in the District and there should be no expansion of existing Employment Areas
- b. New Employment Areas should be designated if there is a requirement for more employment, but only within existing settlements
- c. New Employment Areas should be designated if there is a requirement for more employment, and could be within existing settlements or adjacent to settlements, within the countryside or Green Belt
- d. There should be extensions to existing Employment Areas if there is a requirement for more employment, but only within existing settlements
- e. There should be extensions to existing Employment Areas if there is a requirement for more employment, and they could be within existing settlements or adjacent to settlements, within the countryside or Green Belt.

## Town Centres

Retail uses occupy most town centre units and shopping is the most important reason why people visit the town centres during the day. It is important to the health of the town centres that shopping remains the main function.

However, the town centres include a mixture of other uses over and above shops. These include services, food and drink outlets, leisure uses, as well as some offices and residential. Successful town centres have the right mix of uses. The Council wants to promote the most appropriate type of development and mix of uses for each of the towns.

Some local authorities define the core of their shopping areas as 'primary', while the rest of the area is defined as 'secondary'. Separate policy criteria are applied to the two areas, with more protection for shops within the primary area. The Council has therefore identified the following options for controlling uses in town centres:

- a. Let market forces determine the mix of uses in town centres
- b. Define Primary and Secondary shopping areas with restrictions on the loss of shops in Primary areas
- c. Resist any non-shop uses within the town centres

For the smaller centres, the following options have been identified:

- a. Let market forces determine the mix of uses in smaller centres
- b. Allow the loss of shops and services where it can be shown that there is no longer a demand for the unit
- c. Resist the loss of any shops or services to other uses

## Transport

Under its planning powers, the District Council can affect transport by ensuring development takes place in locations that are accessible by a range of modes of transport, thereby reducing reliance on the car. The options for housing and employment locations have already been described above. There are other things the Council can do to encourage alternative modes of travel and reduce car usage. A number of options are described below (note that more than one could be chosen):

- a. Ensure that developers make adequate provision for non-car modes; public transport, cycling and walking.
- b. Introduce car-parking standards that are compatible with the location in line with maximum standards.
- c. Make sure large new developments make provision for improved and integrated transport infrastructure.
- d. Make new large employers prepare Green Travel Plans.

# 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 that<sup>3</sup>:

*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*<sup>4</sup>

## 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:

---

<sup>3</sup> Annex 1

<sup>4</sup> 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 2 to this report.

<b>Plan, Programme or Policy</b>
<b>European</b>
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
<b>National</b>
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)
PPG3: Housing (2000)
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)
PPG25: Development and Flood Risk (2000)
PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development (2005)
PPS6: Planning for Town Centres (2005)
PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas ( 2004)
Draft PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (2004)
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)
<b>Regional</b>
East of England Plan: Draft revision to the RSS for the East of England (Dec 2004)
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)
Our Plan for Water Supply to 2030 – Three Valleys Water
Anglian Water Resource Plan 2004 – Anglian Water
Towns and Cities – Strategy and Action Plan: Urban Renaissance in the East of England
<b>Sub-Regional</b>
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
<b>County</b>
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)
An Economic Development Strategy for Hertfordshire 2000-2005 (Oct 2000)
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)
<b>Local (District wide)</b>
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
<b>Sub-District</b>
Hitchin Town Centre Strategy

Hitchin Transportation Plan (1998)
Draft Hitchin Town Centre Public Transport Strategy (Aug 2004)

# 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 DPD<sup>5</sup> 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 and policies will be tested against the appraisal objectives. For example when testing options for development 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 importance<sup>6</sup>.*

## 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 18<sup>th</sup> 2005, which included other sources of information. The revised list is shown in Appendix 1.

# 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 3), 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*<sup>7</sup>.

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 LDF objectives though they may in some cases overlap with them.

---

<sup>5</sup> Development Plan Document

<sup>6</sup> Annex 1(d)

<sup>7</sup> Annex 5

## Developing objectives for appraising the North Hertfordshire LDF

An initial set of objectives and sub-objectives was produced by the consultants, based on the following sources:

- Objectives used in the sustainability appraisal of the East of England Plan<sup>8</sup>. 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.<sup>9</sup>

It was then refined, based on discussions with the Officer Steering Group at a meeting on May 18<sup>th</sup> 2005. The refined objectives are shown in the table overleaf. The objectives which address the issues which are required to be covered by the SEA Directive<sup>10</sup> are shown underlined.

<b>SA Objective</b> <i>(those relevant to the SEA Directive are shown underlined)</i>	<b>SA Sub Objective:</b> <i>will the policy or proposal help to...</i>
<b>ECONOMIC ACTIVITY</b>	
1 Achieve sustainable levels of prosperity and economic growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maintain a diversified economy, with increased resilience to external shocks?</li> <li>• encourage new business to start-up and thrive in the District?</li> <li>• support and encourage the rural economy and diversification?</li> <li>• support and promote sustainable tourism in towns and rural areas?</li> <li>• improve the quality of local jobs available to people in the District?</li> <li>• increase the skills base?</li> <li>• make the cost of housing more affordable to those employed in the District?</li> </ul>
<b>LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS</b>	
<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"> <li>• promote the use of brownfield sites and if brownfield sites are not available, land of low environmental and amenity value?</li> <li>• maximise reuse of vacant buildings and derelict</li> </ul>

<sup>8</sup> East of England Plan: Sustainability Appraisal Report Levett-Therival Sustainability Consultants and Land Use Consultants November 2004

<sup>9</sup> Securing the Future March 2005

<sup>10</sup> listed in Annex 1(f)

	<p>land?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• minimise the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land?</li> <li>• reduce quantity of unremediated contaminated land?</li> </ul>
<u>2(b) Provide access to green spaces</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide/improve access for all residents of the District to green spaces?</li> <li>• provide opportunities for people to come into contact with and appreciate wildlife and wild places?</li> <li>• maintain/improve the public right of way network?</li> </ul>
<u>2 (c) Deliver more sustainable location patterns and reduce the use of motor vehicles</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• locate development so as to reduce the need to travel?</li> <li>• reduce car reliance, encourage walking, cycle, bus, and train use?</li> <li>• reduce road freight movements?</li> <li>• avoid exacerbating local traffic congestion?</li> <li>• provide affordable, accessible public transport in towns and in rural areas?</li> </ul>
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION</b>	
<u>3(a) Protect and enhance biodiversity</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• protect habitats and species, especially those designated as being of importance, and provide opportunities for creation of new habitats?</li> <li>• support and maintain extent of wetland habitat and river habitats?</li> </ul>
<u>3(b) Protect and enhance landscapes</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• protect and enhance landscapes, especially those of historic, recreational or amenity value, and within the Chilterns AONB?</li> </ul>
<u>3(c) Conserve and where appropriate, enhance the historic environment</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• conserve and enhance the historic built character of the District's town's and villages?</li> <li>• protect sites of archaeological and historic importance, whether designated or not?</li> </ul>
<u>3(d) Reduce pollution from any source</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improve the water quality of rivers and groundwater supplies?</li> <li>• achieve good air quality?</li> <li>• reduce ambient noise, especially from traffic?</li> <li>• reduce light pollution in the District?</li> <li>• protect soil quality?</li> </ul>
<b>CLIMATE CHANGE</b>	
<u>4(a) Reduce greenhouse gas emissions</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• minimise energy consumption by transport and in buildings?</li> <li>• increase proportion of energy generated by renewable sources?</li> <li>• encourage use of local suppliers and the consumption of local produce?</li> </ul>
<u>4(b) Improve the District's ability to adapt to climate change</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reduce vulnerability to climate change, exploit any benefits?</li> <li>• avoid development in areas at risk from flooding?</li> </ul>

<b>A JUST SOCIETY</b>	
5(a) Share benefits of prosperity fairly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reduce disparities in income levels?</li> <li>• contribute to regeneration of deprived areas (estates in Letchworth and Hitchin)?</li> <li>• provide employment and other opportunities for unemployed, especially long term unemployed and the disabled?</li> <li>• encourage entrepreneurial activity in deprived areas?</li> </ul>
5(b) Provide access to services and facilities for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide access to services and facilities without need to use a car?</li> <li>• retain rural services, especially shops, post offices, schools, health centres and bus services?</li> <li>• recognise the needs of specific groups such as minority ethnic groups, the young, the elderly and the disabled?</li> </ul>
5(c) Promote community cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• support development of voluntary sector?</li> <li>• encourage development of community run business?</li> <li>• encourage people's feelings of belonging, for example by providing community meeting places ?</li> <li>• recognise and value cultural and ethnic diversity ?</li> </ul>
5(d) Increase access to decent and affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• help improve the quality of the housing stock and reduce the number of unfit homes?</li> <li>• increase access to affordable housing, particularly for the young, the disabled and key workers?</li> </ul>
5(e) Reduce crime rates and fear of crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• encourage crime reduction, particularly through the appropriate design of new development?</li> <li>• help reduce the fear of crime?</li> </ul>
<u>5(f) Improve conditions and services that engender good health and reduce health inequalities</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• help promote healthy lifestyles?</li> <li>• improve access to health services by means other than private cars?</li> <li>• reduce ambient noise near residential and amenity areas?</li> <li>• reduce road accidents?</li> <li>• reduce accidents and damage from fires?</li> </ul>
5(g) Increase participation in education and life-long learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improve access to skills learning by young people?</li> <li>• improve access to skills learning by adults?</li> </ul>
5(h) Maintain and improve culture, leisure and recreational activities that are available to all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increase access to culture, leisure and recreational activities?</li> </ul>
<b>RESOURCE USE AND WASTE</b>	
<u>6(a) Use natural resources efficiently; reuse, use recycled where possible</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• minimise the demand for raw materials?</li> <li>• encourage sustainable design, use of sustainable building materials and minimise wastage caused by construction methods?</li> <li>• limit water consumption to levels supportable by natural process and storage systems?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• protect groundwater resources?</li> <li>• promote sustainable drainage systems?</li> <li>• reduce minerals extracted and imported?</li> </ul>
<u>6(b) Reduce waste</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reduce, reuse or recycle waste generated?</li> </ul>
<b>TOWN CENTRES</b>	
7 Promote sustainable urban living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• encourage wider range of shops and services in town centres?</li> <li>• encourage more people to live in town centres?</li> <li>• encourage mixed use developments in town centres?</li> <li>• improve transport connections in, and to, town centres?</li> <li>• encourage synergy in land uses, which supports the continued and enhanced viability of a wide range of shops and services?</li> </ul>

# 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*<sup>11</sup>.

The Baseline review for North Hertfordshire is included in Appendix 3. It includes a number of desirable indicators for which no data could be found.

---

<sup>11</sup> Annex1 (c)

# Appendix 1 Key Sustainability Issues

SA Objective <sup>12</sup>	Issues	Source
<b>ECONOMIC ACTIVITY</b>		
1 Achieve sustainable levels of prosperity and economic growth	Difficulties in competing with large urban centres for provision of employment and facilities	Discussion with Officer Steering Group
	Promotion of rural tourism. Visitors can be important to rural areas, but the District is not seen as a prime tourist location.	Discussion with Officer Steering Group
	Need to provide more high quality employment in the District. This will help reduce the disparity between local income and that of commuters, and to reduce the environmental impacts of commuting. One cause of this is the high cost of housing; employers don't see the District as a location of choice.	Herts Rural Innovation Strategy (p30) North Herts Learning Forum Action Plan LSC Action Plan
	Recruitment of skilled workers: within rural Hertfordshire 15% of employers report difficulty in recruiting the skills they need. This compares with a 10% average for Hertfordshire and as little as 2% in the south of the County. Equally 19% of Hertfordshire firms report that a lack of skilled labour is a limiting factor in increasing output.	NHDC Corporate Plan (p6) Discussion with Officer Steering Group
<b>LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS</b>		
<u>2(a) Minimise the development of greenfield land and other land with high environmental and amenity value</u>	The need to provide additional housing for local needs, and to meet additional regional requirements will require the use of greenfield sites and put significant pressure on the environment and quality of life in the District. Possible developments are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the proposed expansion of Stevenage (West of A1(M) into the North Hertfordshire green belt</li> <li>the proposed expansion of Luton, which will impact onto the North Hertfordshire parishes lying against its boundary, which are in the green belt</li> </ul>	NHDC Corporate Plan (p6) Key issue 'We will protect the environment by vigorously challenging airport and greenfield housing development.'
<u>2 (c) deliver more sustainable location patterns and reduce the use of motor vehicles</u>	Population and mobility factors have changed the function of villages from employment service centres to dormitory/residential functions reducing their social and physical diversity.	Herts Rural Innovation Strategy (p31)
	The high levels of journeys and complex settlement pattern means that it is difficult to maintain a commercially viable passenger transport for journeys other than to London.	Herts Rural Innovation Strategy (p31)

<sup>12</sup> Those relevant to the SEA Directive are shown underlined

SA Objective <sup>12</sup>	Issues	Source
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION</b>		
<u>3(a) Protect and maintain biodiversity</u>	Possible housing developments discussed above, plus the proposed expansion of London Luton and Stansted airports will have a significant impact on District's environment.	NHDC Community Strategy (p 7)
<u>3(b) Protect and enhance landscapes</u>	Pressures on locally significant habitats and species in the District. These include fragmentation of habitats, loss of corridors and the direct impacts of agriculture and new development.	Discussion with Officer Steering Group Biodiversity Action Plan
<u>3(d) Reduce pollution from any source</u>	Quality of surface and ground water is threatened by the water supply needs and drainage from future developments. Adequate supply for future developments is also an issue: see 6a below.	Herts Environmental Forum Strategy Discussion with Officer Steering Group
<b>CLIMATE CHANGE</b>		
<u>4(a) Reduce greenhouse gas emissions</u>	Transport use is a significant contributor to global warming. Journey lengths are above the county average for work and leisure journeys in North Hertfordshire//Stevenage, and there is a high car use for the school run.	North Herts Area Transport Plan (NHATP) Table 7 Issues and problems identified through consultation. NHDC Rural Strategy (Annex 4 – Priority 7 – transport) County Transport Plan
	Domestic and commercial energy use is also a significant contributor to global warming.	Discussion with Officer Steering Group
<b>A JUST SOCIETY</b>		
5(a) Share access to services and benefits of prosperity fairly	Whilst the District is relatively prosperous there are pockets of income and/ or multiple deprivation in relation to national standards. In the towns these occur in Hitchin (West Mill) and Letchworth (South East) In the rural areas specific issues are isolation and lack of access to services.	NHDC Corporate Plan (p4) Anti-Poverty Strategy 1998, summarised in Appendix to NHDC Social Inclusion Strategy. Herts Rural Innovation Strategy (p31) Community Legal Service Strategy 2003
5(b) Provide access to services and facilities for all	There has been a reduction in village services and employment over the last 20 years. This particularly affects the elderly and young people. The number of households in the area with an elderly person in it is higher than the national average at 34%. This rises to 43% in some parts of the District. Some villages have high percentages of young people that have limited access to services. This is because of lack of planned recreational activities within	Herts Rural Innovation Strategy (p31) Older Peoples Strategy

SA Objective <sup>12</sup>	Issues	Source
	villages and limited public transport to larger settlements. The same issue applies to elderly and young people living in some neighbourhood areas of our towns.	
5(d). Increase access to decent and affordable housing	There is a need to improve supply of high-quality affordable housing. The need for affordable housing has been exacerbated by insufficient development of affordable units over the last decade. Coupled with significant inflation in the housing market the gap has widened between the 'haves' and 'have-nots'. Specific issues on affordable housing include key worker housing, housing for young people and the disabled.	NHDC Corporate Plan (p6) Herts Rural Innovation Strategy (p30) NHDC Rural Strategy (Annex 4 – Priority 4 – Housing) Housing Strategy 2004 Affordable housing programme
5(e) Reduce crime rates and fear of crime	NHDC is generally very safe, but fear of crime is an issue in the District. The crime survey showed that areas of concern about crime and disorder are spread throughout the District. A particular issue is street crime in town centres, which is naturally higher due to the concentration of licensed premises, clubs and car parks etc.	NHDC Corporate Plan (p7) North Herts CDRP Strategy 2005-08 Crime Audit 2004 Fear of Crime Survey 2004 Discussion with Officer Steering Group
5(f) Improve conditions and services that engender good health and reduce health inequalities	Generally speaking across all age groups the population of North Hertfordshire and Stevenage enjoys good health compared with national averages. This however masks some areas at ward or sub-ward level of significant deprivation and poorer health status. The incidence of age-related poor health, including fuel poverty (hypothermia related) and senility are higher in North Hertfordshire.	Health Improvement and Modernisation Programme, North Herts and Stevenage PCT 2005 (p6) Director of Public Health Report 2005 Discussion with Officer Steering Group.
	Noise from air and road transport has a significant effect on quality of life in the District. Proposed developments will have significant additional impacts.	Discussion with Officer Steering Group
	There are also important local issues regarding the need to integrate and co-ordinate transport services and arrangements to improve access to health facilities.	Health Improvement and Modernisation Programme, North Herts and Stevenage PCT. (p35) Health Scrutiny report
<b>RESOURCE USE AND WASTE</b>		
6 (a). Use natural resources efficiently; reuse, use recycled where possible	Hertfordshire has the highest domestic water use in the country. The proposed new developments will put significant pressure on water supply infrastructure, and will require water to be piped in from outside the District.	Discussion with Officer Steering Group

SA Objective <sup>12</sup>	Issues	Source
	The most recent figures available (1997) show that Hertfordshire was a net importer of sand and gravel with consumption exceeding sales by 0.356mt.	Herts Minerals Local Plan Second Deposit Draft (para 1.4.3)
6(b) Reduce waste	Need to reduce waste and increase recycling rates, particularly because waste sites within the County will be full by 2008.	NHDC Corporate Plan (p6) Herts Waste Strategy (p5) Discussion with Officer Steering Group