

SOUTH BUCKS LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

CORE STRATEGY: ISSUES & OPTIONS PAPER

INITIAL SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

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SOUTH BUCKS CORE STRATEGY ISSUES AND OPTIONS PAPER: INITIAL SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

Non-Technical Summary

Introduction

- S.1 The Sustainability Appraisal process (see **Appendix 1**) is a way of ensuring that all plans and programmes, which relate to the development and use of land, are compatible with the aims of sustainable development.
- S.2 Sustainable development is about ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and in the future. Put simply, sustainability looks at balancing a range of competing environmental, social and economic objectives.
- S.3 This report outlines the methodology and main findings of the Sustainability Appraisal of the South Bucks Core Strategy: Issues and Options Paper. Its purpose is to inform the decision making process by highlighting the main impacts each Option could have, and the associated scope for mitigation. In due course, and after careful consideration of the comments received on the draft Options, Preferred Options will be developed by the District Council for further consultation, accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal report. Following this, the Core Strategy will be submitted for independent Examination. When completed, the Core Strategy will provide a long-term vision and broad framework for the planning and control of development in South Bucks District.

The Scoping Report

- S.4 In May 2005, the District Council published its Core Strategy Scoping Report for a six-week period of stakeholder consultation. The purpose of this Scoping Report was to identify the main sustainability issues in South Bucks District and to establish a framework for appraisal of the emerging South Bucks Core Strategy.
- S.5 The Scoping Report includes a review of other plans, programmes and strategies that may have an influence or important bearing on the South Bucks Core Strategy. It provides a summary of the current environmental, social and economic conditions in South Bucks District. This baseline information assisted in the development of the Sustainability Appraisal Framework (see **Appendix 2**) and will also be used to predict the likely effects of the alternative policy options for inclusion in the South Bucks Core Strategy.

Core Strategy: Issues and Options Paper

- S.6 South Bucks District Council has developed a series of Options for addressing some of the key sustainability issues in South Bucks District (Consultation Paper entitled, *South Bucks Local Development Framework - Core Strategy: Issues and Options Paper*). These Options principally consider the alternative approaches to accommodating new housing development (including affordable housing) and the future role and use of employment land in South Bucks District. There are also Options dealing with future retail development and the provision of accommodation for athletes competing in the 2012 Olympics, at Dorney Lake.

The Initial Sustainability Appraisal

- S.7 This report outlines the methodology and main findings of the Initial Sustainability Appraisal of the Core Strategy: Issues and Options Paper. Local authorities must make this appraisal information available to stakeholders, the public and other interested parties, to assist in their consideration of the alternative Options.
- S.8 Each Option has been assessed against the sustainability objectives established through preparation of the Scoping Report (the Sustainability Appraisal Framework). The main environmental, social and economic implications of each Option have been recorded, and a comparative assessment made of their relative advantages and disadvantages. The report also charts the development of the Core Strategy Options, as changes have been made to take into account the preliminary findings of the Sustainability Appraisal.
- S.9 The purpose of Sustainability Appraisal is not to identify the best Option. It is to inform the decision making process, by highlighting the potential implications of pursuing a particular strategy or policy approach.

Consultation

- S.10 The South Bucks Core Strategy: Issues and Options Paper will soon be the subject of stakeholder and public consultation. In addition to informing the responses to this consultation, the methodology and conclusions of the Initial Sustainability Appraisal will be available for review and comment.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this Report

- 1.1 This report presents the sustainability appraisal work undertaken to date in relation to the South Bucks Core Strategy. It includes an appraisal of the Local Development Framework Objectives and the main Core Strategy Options, as well as an initial assessment of the other issues for which Core Strategy policies are proposed.

The Requirement for Sustainability Appraisal

- 1.2 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires Local Development Documents to contribute towards the achievement of more sustainable development. The Sustainability Appraisal process has a key role to play in fulfilling this requirement, by ensuring that sustainability issues are given full consideration in the preparation and adoption of plans.
- 1.3 European Directive 2001/42/EC requires Environmental Assessment of a wide range of Plans and Programmes, including Local Development Documents. The Directive requires that authorities must describe the baseline environment and links to other relevant Plans and Programmes, consider alternatives to their Plans, predict and mitigate the Plan's environmental effects and integrate the results in the decision-making process.
- 1.4 The procedures for Strategic Environmental Assessment are similar to those for Sustainability Appraisal, but the focus is solely on environmental issues. To avoid unnecessary duplication and ensure an integrated approach to the plan making

process, the Office for the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) has issued draft guidance ⁽¹⁾ to Planning Authorities, confirming that it is possible to satisfy both requirements through a single appraisal process.

- 1.5 This draft guidance required an Initial Sustainability Appraisal Report to be published alongside the Options Consultation stage. However, in April 2005, as a response to the consultation on the Draft Guidance, the ODPM published an interim advice note of Frequently Asked Questions. This confirmed that the Draft Guidance would be revised before being published in its final form, to remove reference to the Initial Sustainability Appraisal Report, as the process would be '*contrary to the continuous nature of the Regional Spatial Strategy and LDF preparation process*'.
- 1.6 Instead, Local Authorities are advised to conduct Sustainability Appraisal work throughout the pre-submission process, making the appraisal information available to the public when consulting on the alternative Options. This Core Strategy – Initial Sustainability Appraisal, aims to fulfil this requirement.

The meaning of Sustainable Development

- 1.7 At the heart of sustainable development is the simple idea of ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and in the future. The most widely used definition was drawn up by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987: '*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*'.

⁽¹⁾ Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Framework – Consultation Paper (September 2004).

- 1.8 In 1999 the Government set four main aims for sustainable development in its strategy '*A Better Quality of Life: A Strategy for Sustainable Development in the UK*'. These were:
- Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone
 - Effective protection of the environment
 - Prudent use of natural resources; and
 - Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.
- 1.9 No one of these objectives is more important than another. Whilst there will be tensions between them, in the long term, success is dependent upon simultaneous delivery of all four objectives.

The Sustainability Appraisal Process

- 1.10 Sustainability Appraisal is an iterative process that identifies and reports on the likely significant effects of the plan, including whether implementation will achieve the social, environmental and economic objectives by which sustainable development is defined.
- 1.11 The principal elements of the Sustainability Appraisal process can be summarised as follows:
- Collecting and presenting baseline information;
 - Predicting the significant effects of the plan and addressing them during its preparation;

- Identifying reasonable plan options and their effects;
- Involving the public and authorities with social, environmental and economic responsibilities as part of the assessment process; and
- Monitoring the actual effects of the plan during its implementation.

1.12 **Appendix 1** provides a more detailed summary of the key stages and processes involved in Sustainability Appraisal.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Core Strategy Scoping Report

- 2.1 The District Council published its Draft Core Strategy Scoping Report in May 2005. The purpose of this work was to determine the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal for the South Bucks Core Strategy.
- 2.2 The Scoping Report includes a review of other plans, programmes and strategies that may have an influence or important bearing on the South Bucks Core Strategy. These relationships were identified to enable potential synergies to be exploited and any inconsistencies and constraints to be addressed. The process also helps to ensure that the Sustainability Appraisal Framework was appropriate in scope.
- 2.3 In order to gain a better understanding of the current environmental, social and economic conditions that prevail in South Bucks District, an initial characterisation exercise was undertaken. The characterisation exercise assisted in identifying current and emerging sustainability issues in South Bucks District. These included:
- Making sufficient provision to meet housing requirements for the District as identified in the South East Plan; and locating that development in areas which have local services and / or good access to public transport.
 - Matching the supply of new housing with residents needs for housing. In particular, to increase the supply of affordable housing and to increase the supply of 1 and 2 bedroom dwellings.

- Meeting the needs of an ageing population; including the need for a range of housing for the elderly to remain in their local communities, and the need for health services.
- Maintaining and enhancing the Green Belt, including the restoration of damaged and contaminated land.
- Protecting and enhancing the quality of the District's high quality rural landscape and maintaining and enhancing biodiversity.
- Making provision for development whilst protecting and enhancing the character and townscape of settlements.
- Minimising waste and pollution.
- Minimising the impact of traffic on the environment and local communities.
- Securing a closer match between the supply of labour and the demand for labour.
- The need to make further provision for employment growth (including high quality premises) needs to be balanced against the fact that some sites are unsuitable for continued employment use.
- Providing for appropriate retail opportunities to meet local needs; to assist in safeguarding the Districts centres; and to reduce unnecessary trips to other centres.

The Sustainability Appraisal Framework

- 2.4 The objectives to be used in appraising the South Bucks Core Strategy were drafted by a joint working party made up of Officers from Buckinghamshire County Council and its four constituent District Councils. These draft objectives have been refined through subsequent discussions between Officers and Members at South Bucks District Council, to ensure that the Sustainability Appraisal Framework addresses all of the key local issues (see paragraph 2.3).

Consultation on the Core Strategy Scoping Report

- 2.5 The draft Scoping Report was subject to stakeholder and public consultation from 6th May to 10th June 2005. The Council consulted the four statutory bodies as required by the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (The Environment Agency, The Countryside Agency, English Heritage and English Nature) as well as other stakeholders such as local authorities, environmental, social and economic organisations. Members of the public who had previously expressed an interest in being kept informed on progress with the LDF, were also invited to comment.
- 2.6 The Council received a total of 70 responses (44 from organisations and 26 from individuals) . A number of comments were received in relation to suggested additional indicators. The consultation also identified a number of major issues, such as the need to protect Burnham Beeches from inappropriate development; the future role of Beaconsfield and development pressures at Dorney Lake, due to the 2012 Olympic Games in London. A number of amendments were made to the Scoping Report and the Sustainability Framework as a result of this consultation. Officers were also able to use the responses to further develop the Options for use in the Core Strategy Issues and Options Paper, as well as other Policy Issues.

- 2.7 The version of the Appraisal objectives used to assess the Core Strategy Options, together with the amended indicators, is attached as **Appendix 2**.

3.0 THE SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL PROCESS

3.1 This Initial Sustainability Appraisal addresses three main elements of the emerging South Bucks Core Strategy. These are:

- Local Development Framework Objectives
- Core Strategy Options
- Other Issues for the Core Strategy

The Local Development Framework Objectives

3.2 The Local Development Framework will be guided by a spatial vision. It is proposed that this will be the same vision as the one in the Community Plan.

3.3 More detailed objectives were developed (see **Appendix 3**), to guide preparation of the South Bucks Local Development Framework. These more detailed objectives have been assessed for their internal consistency and compatibility with the principles of sustainable development.

3.4 The findings of this exercise are presented in Section 4.0 of this Report.

The Core Strategy Options

- 3.5 South Bucks District Council has developed a series of Options for addressing some of the key sustainability issues in South Bucks District (Consultation Paper entitled, *South Bucks Core Strategy: Issues and Options Paper*). These Options principally consider the alternative approaches to accommodating new housing development (including affordable housing) and the future role and use of employment land in South Bucks District. There are also Options dealing with future retail development and the provision of accommodation for athletes competing in the 2012 Olympics, at Dorney Lake.
- 3.6 The Sustainability Appraisal of these Options is presented at **Appendix 4**.
- 3.7 Each Option has been appraised using the objectives in the Sustainability Appraisal Framework. This has been an iterative process, whereby the Options and policy choices have been developed and revised, to take into the findings of the sustainability appraisal. The objective of the exercise is to highlight the different advantages and disadvantages of each Option, and to identify the possible means of mitigating any adverse impacts.
- 3.8 The symbols used to record the performance of each Option against each appraisal objective, are as follows:
- | | | | | | |
|----------------|----|----------------|----|-----------|---|
| Major positive | ++ | Minor negative | - | Neutral | 0 |
| Minor positive | + | Major negative | -- | Uncertain | ? |
- 3.9 The findings of this exercise are summarised in Section 5.0.

Other Issues for the Core Strategy

- 3.10 In addition to the Core Strategy Options, South Bucks District Council has identified a number of other potential Core Strategy Policy Issues. It is not appropriate to draft policies for the Core Strategy document at this stage in the plan making process, although it is helpful to consider the potential scope and impact these policies might have in delivering more sustainable development.
- 3.11 **Appendix 5** presents the Other Core Strategy Policy Issues and summarises their potential sustainability effects.

4.0 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL – THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK OBJECTIVES

- 4.1 The draft Sustainability Appraisal guidance suggests that it may be helpful to test the internal compatibility of the Sustainability Appraisal objectives, so as to identify any tensions that exist and consider how these may be addressed.
- 4.2 Table 1 below provides a compatibility assessment of the 17 Sustainability Appraisal Objectives to be used in assessing the South Bucks Core Strategy.

Table 1: Internal Compatibility of the Sustainability Appraisal Objectives

1																	
2																	
3																	
4																	
5																	
6																	
7																	
8																	
9							4	16									
10																	
11	5																
12			3	10			3	7									
13	3																
14												10					
15	7			11	13	2	5							13			
16				12			15										
17																	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17

	Compatible
	Possibly Incompatible

4.3 None of the objectives are inherently incompatible. However, there may be situations where compromises must be made. The tensions between certain objectives will become increasingly apparent as the Core Strategy is developed, and further consideration is given to the specific locations for new development, and its implications for adjoining areas. A more detailed assessment of the potential conflicts between the Sustainability Appraisal Objectives is provided at **Appendix 6**.

Table 2: Testing the Plan Objectives against the Sustainability Appraisal Framework

		Sustainability Appraisal Objectives																	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
LDF Objectives	A		√	√	√					√			X	X	√	√			
	B			√															
	C	√	√			X	X	X	X			X	X	X				√	
	D			X	X	√		X	X			√	√	√					
	E	X	√	X				√	√	√			√	√	√		X		
	F	√	√					X	X				X	√			X		√
	G	√	√											√	√			√	√
	H	X				√	√	√					√	√	√	√	X	X	
	I	X		√	√								√	√		X	√	√	√
	J	X				√	√	√	√	X	√	√	X		√	X	X		
	K	√	√	√										√					√
	L	X		X	√						√		√	√	√	√	√		
	M			√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	X	√	
	N				√						√	√	√	√		√	X	√	
	O			√	√		√		√	√				X		√	X	X	
	P	X				√					√			√		√	X		
	Q	X			√	√	√	√		√	√	√	X		√	X			

KEY	√	Positive Compatible	X	Possible Conflict		Neutral
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- 4.4 The objectives for the Local Development Framework set out what the Plan is aiming to achieve in spatial planning terms. It is important that these objectives accord with the principles of sustainable development. In order to ensure that this is the case, the Local Development Framework objectives have been tested for compatibility with the SA objectives.
- 4.5 None of the Local Development Framework objectives are inherently incompatible with the delivery of more sustainable development. However, in certain circumstances, there will be tensions between the objectives.
- 4.6 The compatibility assessment suggests that the accommodation of new housing in South Bucks District (LDF Objective 3) may give rise to particular issues, with potential adverse implications for a number of the Sustainability Appraisal Objectives. The Core Strategy and associated policies will have an important role to play in directing development to appropriate locations (for example, avoiding areas at risk from flooding) and in due course, ensuring that the design of new development does not adversely impact upon townscape character.
- 4.7 The other area of significant potential conflict is in relation to Sustainability Appraisal Objective 15 (which aims to encourage economic growth and competitiveness) and a number of the Local Development Framework objectives relating to protection of the environment and conserving natural resources. Policies will need to be developed that encourage low impact economic activities, both in terms of resource use and the physical development of new employment land and premises.
- 4.8 A more detailed assessment of the potential conflicts between the Local Development Framework Objectives and the Sustainability Appraisal Objectives is provided at **Appendix 7**.

5.0 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL – CORE STRATEGY OPTIONS

Introduction

- 5.1 Guidance in relation to Sustainability Appraisal and the preparation of Local Development Frameworks confirms that the Options put forward at this stage in the plan making process should be reasonable, realistic and relevant. The Options should also be sufficiently distinct in order to highlight the different sustainability implications of each, so that meaningful comparisons can be made.
- 5.2 A description of the Options and the associated Sustainability Appraisal is provided at **Appendix 4**.

Development of the Main Options

- 5.3 The scope of the Core Strategy Options was first considered in the Core Strategy Scoping Report (May 2005). Officers then developed these initial Options, with a view to addressing the main sustainability and spatial planning issues facing South Bucks District.
- 5.4 The Sustainability Appraisal has been an iterative process, with numerous changes made to the scope and wording of the Options. Some of the principal changes made are summarised below:

Overall Spatial Strategy

- The Options were divided and appraised in two separate scenarios - 'Lower Housing Requirement' and 'Higher Housing Requirement'. This enabled a comparison on a like-for-like basis, and also helped address the uncertainties associated with the housing requirement to be included in the Regional Spatial Strategy.
- An Option relating to other Green Belt Sites was deleted from further consideration. Such sites would not accord with key Government Guidance relating to the use of Previously Developed Land and accessibility to local facilities and services.

Making Efficient Use of Land whilst Protecting Character

- To ensure that the sustainability implications of alternative Options were clear, the development density assumptions for Option H4 were increased from 'up to 30 dwellings per hectare' to '30-50 dwellings per hectare'. The original option would have been inconsistent with Government guidance, which recommends that densities of less than 30dph are avoided. This change also enabled the consideration of issues associated with medium or higher density development, in less accessible locations.

Mix of new Housing Types and Sizes

- Two separate Options were originally devised for ensuring a more appropriate mix of housing types – assessed either at the District level or at the settlement level. However, the sustainability implications of these two Options were very similar, and a combined Option was therefore taken forward for appraisal.

Achieving an increase in Provision of Affordable Housing

- Consideration was given to combining the two Options relating to increasing affordable housing – either through use of a Dwelling Threshold (AH1) or an Area Threshold (AH2). However, the Sustainability Appraisal confirmed that each approach would have different implications. Two separate Options have therefore been retained.

- A new Option was added reflecting the existing policy approach to affordable housing. Continuation of the current policy is a viable Option, and was therefore the subject of Sustainability Appraisal.
- An option to allow commuted payments in lieu of affordable housing only in exceptional circumstances was considered but not retained, as this would be contrary to Government guidance in Circular 6/98.

New Options

- A series of Options relating to Dorney Rowing Lake were developed, principally to address accommodation issues associated with the 2012 Olympics.

The Main Options taken forward for Testing

- 5.5 To ensure the focus has remained on the big issues for South Bucks District, the alternative Options have not been developed in too much detail. At this stage in the plan making process, the Sustainability Appraisal only seeks to identify and document the main differences between the alternative Options.
- 5.6 The Options have been grouped under a series of headings, to enable a comparative assessment to be made. The scope of the Main Options is as follows:

OVERARCHING SPATIAL STRATEGY

Lower Housing Requirement Options

OSS 1 - Urban Focus

OSS 2 - Larger Settlement Urban Focus

OSS 3 - Smaller Settlement Urban Focus

OSS 4 - Urban Focus plus Green Belt Settlements

Higher Housing Requirement Options

OSS 5 - Urban Focus plus Industrial Estates

OSS 6 - Urban Focus with an Urban Extension

OSS 7 - Use of Large Brownfield and Damaged Land Sites

MAKING EFFICIENT USE OF LAND WHILST PROTECTING CHARACTER

Development Density

H 1 - Existing Character

H 2 - District and Local Centres/Public Transport Corridors – Medium Density

H 3 - District Centres/Public Transport Corridors – High Density

H 4 - Non-Centre/Public Transport Locations

THE MIX OF NEW HOUSING TYPES AND SIZES

Dwelling Size and Type

HM 1 - District Needs

HM 2 - Dwellings Conversion Relaxation

HM 3 - Market Forces

ACHIEVING AN INCREASE IN THE PROVISION OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Threshold for Provision of Affordable Housing

AH1 - Dwelling Threshold

AH2 - Area Threshold

AH3 - Green Belt Settlements Threshold

AH4 - Existing Policy

Percentage Provision

AH5 - Current Policy – 20%

AH6 - 35%+ Affordable Housing

Other Development Opportunities for Affordable Housing

AH7 - Employment and Community Land

AH8 - Green Space within Settlements

AH9 - Small Sites - Green Belt Settlements

OVERALL SUPPLY OF EMPLOYMENT LAND

Existing Employment Site Protection

E 1 - Existing Sites – Continued Protection

E 2 - Existing Sites – Some Limited Loss

Intensification of Employment Use

E 3 - Intensification of Large Sites

E 4 - Intensification of Other Sites

E 5 - Intensification of Sites in Green Belt Settlements

E 6 - Relaxation of Green Belt Policy

Type of Employment Development

E 7 - Protect Industrial Uses

E 8 - Balanced Portfolio

E 9 - Market Forces

RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

Retail Floorspace Provision

R1 - District Shopping Centre Focus

R2 - Local Shopping Centre Focus

R3 - Out of Existing Centres Focus

DORNEY ROWING LAKE

Competitor Accommodation

DRL1 - Permanent Competitor Accommodation Close to Lake

DRL2 - Permanent Competitor Accommodation Away from Lake

DRL3 - Temporary Competitor Accommodation Close to Lake

5.7 A more detailed description of the aims and scope of each Option is provided at **Appendix 4**.

Sustainability Appraisal of the Options

- 5.8 The appraisal identifies the significant effects of each Option against each Sustainability Appraisal objective, and where appropriate, highlights any cumulative, short-term and, long-term effects, and whether they are likely to be permanent or temporary.
- 5.9 The following section seeks to highlight some of the more significant issues that have been identified through the Sustainability Appraisal of the South Bucks Core Strategy: Issues and Options Paper.

Overarching Spatial Strategy

- 5.10 The annual housing requirement for South Bucks District will be determined through preparation of the Regional Spatial Strategy. In broad terms, Scenario 1 (the lower housing requirement Options) will result in less development, and should therefore help to preserve the landscape and townscape character of South Bucks District. Scenario 2 (The higher housing requirement Options) are likely to deliver more new affordable housing.

Scenario 1 - Lower Housing Requirement Options

- 5.11 Option OSS2, which focuses development on the larger urban areas, scores positively against the majority of the Sustainability Appraisal objectives. One area of concern is the potential impact of the higher density development that may

be required under this Option. Further consideration will need to be given to policies in the Core Strategy that deal with the density and design of new development in urban areas.

- 5.12 The negative impacts associated with the other lower housing requirement Options are principally related to the relatively poor access new residents would have to local facilities, services and employment opportunities. In addition to the social implications, there would be adverse environmental impacts associated with increased private car use, which would be difficult to mitigate.

Scenario 2 - Higher Housing Requirement Options

- 5.13 Option OSS6, which makes provision for an urban extension, is the only housing Option to propose development on greenfield land. However, subject to an appropriate policy framework, the location chosen for an urban extension could help support many of the other Sustainability Appraisal objectives, including those relating to accessibility and reducing the need to travel.
- 5.14 Conversely, Option OSS7 would actively encourage the reuse of previously developed and damaged land. However, the types of site that would be developed under this Option would have relatively poor accessibility to local facilities, services and employment opportunities.
- 5.15 Option OSS5, which allows for the redevelopment of some employment land, shares many of the advantages associated with Option OSS6. The principal difference between the two options is that Option OSS5, whilst making use of previously

developed land, would have a significant adverse impact on the objectives relating to economic growth and diversity. Mitigation measures could involve the more efficient use of other existing employment sites, or the provision of new employment land. The latter could involve greenfield development, with its own adverse implications on some of the environmental objectives.

Making Efficient use of Land whilst Protecting Character

- 5.16 The Sustainability Appraisal of these Options allows consideration of the most appropriate balance between the potentially competing objectives of protecting townscape character and making more efficient use of urban land.
- 5.17 Option H1 (which is effectively a continuation of existing Local Plan policy) gives greater weight to maintaining the character and distinctiveness of the existing locality, than securing higher density development. In broad terms, the lower density housing associated with this Option, would deliver fewer smaller, affordable homes. Furthermore, Option H1 would not help make the most efficient use of urban land.
- 5.18 The advantages and disadvantages of Options H2 and H3 (medium or high density development in accessible locations) are broadly similar, although Option H3 would facilitate the provision of more new housing in accessible locations. Less positively, the new development under Option H3 may be more difficult to accommodate without leading to an adverse impact on townscape character. Again, the design of new development schemes will be critical in this regard.

- 5.19 Option H4 (medium density development in less accessible locations) would not support the Sustainability Appraisal objective relating to encouraging the use of more sustainable modes of transport.

The Mix of New Housing Types and Sizes

- 5.20 New housing in South Bucks District should be of an appropriate size and type to meet local needs. If left to market forces (Option HM3), it is unlikely that the requirement for new one and two bedroom units would be met.
- 5.21 Options HM1, which would require a range of dwelling types and HM2, which would allow the subdivision of dwellings, could be implemented in tandem. In addition to providing new housing that is more appropriate to local needs, these Options would help to make more efficient use of available urban land.

Achieving an Increase in the Provision of Affordable Housing

- 5.22 The requirement for more affordable housing is one of the main sustainability issues in South Bucks District. Options AH1 and AH2, which deal with the dwelling and area threshold for provision of new affordable housing, could be implemented in tandem. They would both encourage the provision of more affordable housing, although in certain circumstances, they may adversely impact upon the viability of certain development schemes.
- 5.23 Option AH3 would help ensure that most new housing developments in the Green Belt contributed towards the requirement for more affordable housing. However, careful consideration would need to be given to the impact such development has the

character of Green Belt settlements. Furthermore, in general, the new residents would have relatively poor access to local community facilities and services.

- 5.24 A continuation of the existing Local Plan Policy (Option AH4) would do the least to support the provision of new affordable housing. In addition to the obvious social implications, the shortage of affordable housing is leading to labour shortages, particularly in some of the lower paid professions.
- 5.25 Options AH5 and AH6 deal with the percentage of affordable housing to be sought from sites within the threshold. Option AH6 (35%+ Affordable Housing) would help deliver more affordable housing in South Bucks District. However, this may result in some adverse impact on settlement character and could prevent some previously developed sites from coming forward for development.

Overall Supply of Employment Land

- 5.26 Current Local Plan policy protects all existing employment land from other types of development. A continuation of this policy (Option E1) would provide little scope to address situations where an employment site is no longer suitable for such a use, or where associated vehicular movements are already having adverse impacts on nearby residential areas.
- 5.27 Option E2 would allow some redevelopment of existing employment land, enabling the more efficient use of land resources and potentially supporting the economic objectives encouraging higher value added, lower impact activities.

- 5.28 A number of Options have been developed for allowing the intensification of certain employment sites. In broad terms, intensification could help to avoid the need for identification of new employment sites, and could potentially release poorly located employment sites for other uses. However, the intensification of existing large employment sites (Option E3) could exacerbate existing problems with HGV movements through nearby settlements. In addition, the large employment sites in South Bucks District are predominantly occupied by industrial and storage type operations, and therefore Option E3 would do little to encourage lower impact, higher value added activities.
- 5.29 Options E5 and E6 deal with the intensification of employment uses within Green Belt settlements, or on sites within the Green Belt that are currently in employment use. In broad terms, the sites to be identified under these Options would have relatively poor accessibility, and there would be the potential for development to have an adverse impact on townscape and landscape character.
- 5.30 Several Options have been developed, which consider the future structure of the South Bucks economy. Option E7 seeks to protect existing industrial uses. This option would provide limited scope to address local land and air pollution issues, or the problems caused by HGV movements through nearby settlements. Option E9, which would allow market forces to dictate the future shape of the local economy, could well help encourage the redevelopment of certain employment sites for new housing. The major disadvantage of this Option would be that it would lead to a less diverse economy, and therefore would not provide the same range of local job opportunities. Option E8 (balanced portfolio of employment uses) scores comparatively well in the Sustainability Assessment, with no significant adverse implications.

Retail Development

- 5.31 South Bucks District is located in close proximity to a number of strategic centres, which offer a wide range of shops and associated leisure opportunities. Unless additional retailing provision is made locally, then there will be a continued reliance on trips to other strategic centres outside of the District.
- 5.32 Option R1 encourages the provision of new retail floorspace within existing District shopping centres. The principal benefit of this Option is that it would encourage new retail floorspace in accessible locations and would help encourage the more efficient use of urban land. Conversely, Option R3 (Out of Existing Centre Focus) would provide new retail floorspace in less accessible locations, encouraging more trips by private car.

Dorney Rowing Lake

- 5.33 A series of options have been developed for providing new accommodation at or near Dorney Lake, to provide for the competitors in the Olympics 2012. The Sustainability Appraisal identifies the difference between Option DRL1 (Permanent Competitor Accommodation close to the Lake) and Option DRL3 (Temporary Competitor Accommodation close to the Lake). The latter would only have transient adverse impacts on the local landscape and biodiversity.
- 5.34 Provision of competitor accommodation away from the Lake (Option DRL2) may not represent the most sustainable option during the Olympics. However, if the provision is to be permanent, new competitor accommodation within existing urban areas, close to local facilities and services, may represent the more sustainable option in the long-term.

Conclusion

- 5.35 There are several common themes running through the Options. For the housing, employment and retailing Options, there is a trade-off to be made between higher density development (or intensification of existing uses), and the need for development on greenfield land. The design policies to be included in the South Bucks Development Framework will have an important role to play in ensuring that new housing, employment and retail schemes do not adversely impact upon the landscape and townscape character of surrounding areas.
- 5.36 In terms of the locational strategy for South Bucks District, the main Options are to focus development on the larger settlements, or to adopt a strategy of dispersal. By its very nature, a focus on the larger settlements is likely to mean higher density development in these areas, and a greater degree of change. By dispersing development, new housing and employment land provision will need to be accommodated in less accessible locations, where access to public transport is generally limited.
- 5.37 A further important theme is the future approach to employment land in South Bucks District. There will be tensions between making more efficient use of developed land and addressing local amenity issues, and the importance of maintaining a balanced portfolio of employment sites and job opportunities.

6.0 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL – OTHER ISSUES FOR THE CORE STRATEGY

- 6.1 In addition to the Main Options, there are other Policy Issues that will need to be addressed in the South Bucks Core Strategy. The table presented at **Appendix 5** lists these other potential policy issues and briefly considers their potential implications for sustainable development, and the requirement (or otherwise) for a full sustainability appraisal.
- 6.2 Draft guidance issued by the ODPM (September 2004) advises that in developing and refining the Options for inclusion in a Development Plan Document, the local planning authority should conduct a Sustainability Appraisal of the broad issues and options. The purpose of the exercise is to identify the most significant environmental, social and economic impacts of pursuing a particular option.
- 6.3 Interim guidance from the ODPM (April 2005) confirms that Local Planning Authorities are not required to justify national policies when conducting Sustainability Appraisals. However, it is desirable for the appraisal of Local Development Documents (including the South Bucks Core Strategy) to include information on the significant sustainability effects of implementing national policy. Where there are alternatives means of implementing national policy, these should be examined as part of the Sustainability Appraisal process.

7.0 NEXT STAGES

- 7.1 The following is based on draft advice given in the ODPM consultation paper ‘Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks’ (September 2004). It will therefore be subject to minor change when the final guidance is published. More detail on these stages is given in **Appendix 1**.
- 7.2 The findings of consultation on the Core Strategy Issues and Options Paper will need to be taken into account in preparing the Preferred Options. Stage C of the Sustainability Appraisal process deals with appraising the effects of the emerging options. Task C1 predicts the effects of the Preferred Options and C2 assesses the significance of these effects. If significant effects are predicted, measures to mitigate them will be considered in Task C3. Proposals for monitoring are developed in Task C4. Task C5 is the preparation of a final Sustainability Appraisal Report.
- 7.3 Stage D is concerned with consulting on the Sustainability Appraisal Report and the Preferred Options. If significant changes are made to the Preferred Options, then a Sustainability Appraisal will be required for all changes. The final Sustainability Appraisal Report will be submitted to the Secretary of State with the submitted Core Strategy for independent Examination.
- 7.4 The Examination will provide an opportunity for the Core Strategy to be tested for ‘soundness’. If changes are made to the Core Strategy during the Examination stage of the Core Strategy, part of Stage D may need to be repeated. After the examination, the Inspector will produce a report with recommendations that are binding on the Local Planning Authority. If the Inspector suggests significant changes in the report, a sustainability appraisal will need to be taken on the changes,

unless these have already been considered at the Examination. The LPA must incorporate these changes into the Core Strategy and the Sustainability Appraisal should be amended as necessary. The Core Strategy can then be adopted.

7.5 Stage E of the Sustainability Appraisal process deals with monitoring implementation of the Core Strategy.

APPENDIX 1

SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL: STAGES AND TASKS

SEA Stages and Tasks	Purpose
Stage A: Setting the Context and Objectives, establishing the Baseline and deciding on the Scope	
Identifying other relevant plans, programmes and environmental protection objectives	To establish how the plan or programme is affected by outside factors, to suggest ideas for how any constraints can be addressed, and to help to identify SEA objectives.
Collecting baseline information	To provide an evidence base for environmental problems, prediction of effects, and monitoring; to help in the development of SEA objectives.
Identifying environmental problems	To help focus the SEA and streamline the subsequent stages, including baseline information analysis, setting of the SEA objectives, prediction of effects and monitoring.
Developing SEA objectives	To provide a means by which the environmental performance of the plan or programme and alternatives can be assessed.
Consulting on the scope of SEA	To ensure that the SEA covers the likely significant environmental effects of the plan or programme.
Stage B: Developing and Refining Alternatives and Assessing Effects	
Testing the plan or programme objectives against the SEA objectives	To identify potential synergies or inconsistencies between the objectives of the plan or programme and the SEA objectives and help in developing alternatives.
Developing strategic alternatives	To develop and refine strategic alternatives.
Predicting the effects of the plan or programme, including alternatives	To predict the significant environmental effects of the plan or programme and alternatives.
Evaluating the effects of the plan or programme, including alternatives	To evaluate the predicted effects of the plan or programme and its alternatives and assist in the refinement of the plan or programme.
Mitigating adverse effects	To ensure that adverse effects are identified and potential mitigation measures are considered.
Proposing measures to monitor the environmental effects of plan or programme implementation	To detail the means by which the environmental performance of the plan or programme can be assessed.

SEA Stages and Tasks	Purpose
Stage C: Preparing the Environmental Report	
Preparing the Environmental Report	To present the predicted environmental effects of the plan or programme, including alternatives, in a form suitable for public consultation and use by decision-makers.
Stage D: Consulting on the Draft Plan or Programme and the Environmental Report	
Consulting the public and Consultation Bodies on the draft plan or programme and the Environmental Report	To give the public and the Consultation Bodies an opportunity to express their opinions on the findings of the Environmental Report and to use it as a reference point in commenting on the plan or programme. To gather more information through the opinions and concerns of the public.
Assessing significant changes	To ensure that the environmental implications of any significant changes to the draft plan or programme at this stage are assessed and taken into account.
Making decisions and providing information	To provide information on how the Environmental Report and consultees' opinions were taken into account in deciding the final form of the plan or programme to be adopted.
Stage E: Monitoring the significant effects of implementing the Plan or Programme on the Environment	
Developing aims and methods for monitoring	To track the environmental effects of the plan or programme to show whether they are as predicted; to help identify adverse effects.
Responding to adverse effects	To prepare for appropriate responses where adverse effects are identified.

APPENDIX 2

SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL FRAMEWORK (with amended indicators)

Social Objectives and Indicators	
1. To provide residents of South Bucks with the opportunity to live in a decent home	1. Proportion of vulnerable people in decent homes.
	2. Housing completions, allocations and permissions.
	3. Number of empty properties per annum.
	4. House price/earnings affordability ratio.
	5. New homes built which are affordable housing.
	6. Number of households on the housing register.
	7. Number of homeless households.
2. To reduce anti-social activity, including crime and the fear of crime, through the creation of safer places to live and work.	1. Recorded crimes per 1,000 population for domestic burglaries, violent offences and vehicle crimes.
	2. Police survey results on the Fear of Crime. (Future indicator)
	3. Number of fatal and serious road accident occurring in a particular year.

¹ The monitoring year runs from 1st April to 31st March.

<p>3. To improve accessibility to essential services and facilities to provide opportunities to obtain good access to high quality health, education, and recreation and other community facilities and services.</p>	<p>Percentage of new residential development within 30 minutes public transport time or walking time of a GP, hospital, primary and secondary school and major health centre.</p>
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<p>Environmental Objectives and Indicators</p>	
<p>4. To encourage the use of sustainable and integrated methods of transport to reduce negative effects on the environment</p>	<p>1. Percentage of schools with a School Travel Plan in South Bucks.</p>
	<p>2. Annual average flow (per 1,000 km) of traffic on the principal roads.</p>
<p>5. To provide for sustainable levels of water use, supply and management.</p>	<p>1. Water leakage rate from mains and customer pipes. (Regional data)</p>
	<p>2. Amount of water used and availability of future supplies. (Regional data)</p>
<p>6. To maintain and enhance biodiversity</p>	<p>1. To increase area of lowland heath by 10 hectares.</p>
	<p>2. Condition and area (hectares) of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and Special Area of Conservation (SACs).</p>
	<p>3. Area of the District (hectares) covered by Ancient Woodland, and covered by woodland grant scheme.</p>
	<p>4. Extent of Local Nature Reserves, County Wildlife Sites, National Nature Reserve and Regional Important Geological / Geomorphological Sites.</p>

7. To conserve and enhance the landscape and townscape character of South Bucks and in particular, those areas of designated importance.	1. Area of the District (hectares) falling within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
	2. Area of the District (hectares) covered by Local Landscape Areas and Areas of Attractive Landscape designations.
	3. Area under agreement (hectares) under the Environmentally Sensitive Area and Countryside Stewardship agri-environment schemes.
	4. An accessible County Wildlife Site 1km from home Statutory Local Nature Reserves provided at a minimum level of 1 ha per 1,000 population. At least one accessible 20 ha site within 2 km of home, one accessible 100 ha site within 5 km of home and one accessible 500 ha site within 10 km of home.
8. To conserve and enhance the historic environment.	1. Numbers of buildings of Grade I and II* at risk of decay.
	2. Loss or damage to scheduled ancient monuments (number) & historic parks and gardens (hectares).
	3. Number of Conservation Area reviews completed and number of new areas added per annum.
9. To reduce contributions to climate change through: a) Sustainable building practices b) Maximising the potential for renewable energy and energy conservation.	1. The overall improvement in energy efficiency for existing buildings p.a.
	2. Number of new buildings achieving either the SAP rating of 100 or BREEAM rating “very good” for energy efficiency.
	3. Energy use per household (gas and electricity)
	4. Renewable energy capacity installed by type.

10. Minimise waste and then re-use or recover it through recycling, composting or energy recovery.	Percentage of the tonnage of household waste arising which have been a) recycled b) composted c) used to recover heat, power and other energy sources d) land filled in a particular year.
11. To conserve soil resources & quality.	Loss of best and most versatile agricultural land (grades 1,2 and 3a) to development.
12. To improve the efficiency of land use through the re-use of existing buildings and developing on previously developed land (PDL).	1. Percentage of new homes built on previously developed land (PDL).
	2. Density of 1. dwellings completed 2. New dwelling permissions granted in a particular monitoring year. ²
	3. Vacant private homes returned to occupation or demolished.
13. To minimise the risk of flooding in relation to both new and existing development including existing infrastructure.	1. Number of properties lying with the EA Flood map.
	2. Number of dwellings and amount of new non-residential floorspace granted permission which is contrary to Environment Agency advice
	3. Number of incidences of blocked or overflowing drains.
14. To reduce pollution of the air, water and soil and also combat sources of noise and light pollution.	1. Passive diffusion tube data suggesting an exceedence of the UK Annual Mean Objective for nitrogen dioxide (NO ₂).
	2. Area covered by Air Quality Management Areas (hectares).
	3. Rivers and chalk streams of 'Good' or 'Fair' chemical and biological water quality.
	4. Number of incidents of major and significant water pollution occurring in a particular year.
	5. Public concern over noise (Number of noise complaints received by category, including light pollution).

² The monitoring year runs from 1st April to 31st March.

Economic Objectives and Indicators	
15.To encourage economic growth and competitiveness, whilst achieving a broad balance in the distribution and growth of housing, population & employment.	1. Net change in the total of VAT registered businesses in the District.
	2. Out commuting levels from the District compared to in commuting levels.
	3. Amount of new employment floorspace granted permission/ completed.
16.To encourage a diverse economy, which is focused on higher value added, lower impact activities.	Number and proportion of employees in knowledge based sectors.
17.To develop and maintain a skilled workforce to support long-term competitiveness of the District.	1. Percentage of 15 year old pupils in schools maintained by the local education authority achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A* - C or equivalent. (County level data)
	2. Percentage of population qualified to National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 3 or equivalent.
	3. Percentage of adults with no qualifications.
	4. Proportion of people of working age who are unemployed.
	5. Proportion of people of working age out of work for more than a year.

APPENDIX 3

OBJECTIVES FOR THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK (amended)

- A** To improve accessibility for all to essential services and facilities by providing opportunities to obtain good access to high quality health, education, recreation and other community services and facilities.
- B** To strive to maximise community involvement and engagement in the planning process, especially by 'hard to reach' groups.
- C** To provide everyone living in South Bucks with the opportunity to live in a decent home.
- D** To improve the efficiency of land use through the re-use of existing buildings and previously developed land.
- E** To protect important open spaces within urban areas.
- F** To increase the level of affordable housing and key worker housing in South Bucks District within the overall level of planned housing development for the District.
- G** To ensure that housing development is of an appropriate size and type to meet local needs.
- H** To preserve and enhance the Green Belt.
- I** To ensure a dynamic and balanced local economy that provides for needs within the District.
- J** To preserve and enhance both the landscape and townscape character of the District and in particular, those areas of designated importance.
- K** To reduce anti-social activity through the creation of safer places to live and work.
- L** To minimise the risk of flooding in relation to both new and existing developments.
- M** To reduce pollution.

- N** To reduce energy consumption and waste and encourage the use of recycled and renewable resources.
- O** To encourage the use of sustainable methods of transport to reduce negative effects on the environment.
- P** To provide for sustainable levels of water use, supply and management.
- Q** To maintain and enhance biodiversity.

APPENDIX 4

SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL OF THE CORE STRATEGY MAIN OPTIONS

APPENDIX 5

SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL OF THE OTHER ISSUES FOR THE CORE STRATEGY

Policy Subject	Description	Sustainability Appraisal
General		
Sustainable Development	<p>This policy will provide the overarching policy for the Core Strategy, to promote sustainable patterns of urban and rural development and help combat climate change. The policy will ensure that environmental, social and economic considerations are considered in decision making.</p> <p>This policy would also set out the overall approach to encouraging good design in new development, including energy efficiency, renewable energy, designing against crime and sustainable construction. Development should be of a high standard of design and respect nearby buildings, whilst helping to reduce the opportunities for crime and conserving energy. The policy would promote renewable energy developments, but acknowledge that large-scale forms of renewable energy are likely to be inappropriate in Green Belts and some other sensitive locations. Sustainable waste and water management, including recycling, will also be encouraged in new development wherever possible.</p>	<p>The aims of this policy fully accord with national and regional guidance on encouraging more sustainable development. There are no alternative options – consideration must be given to environmental, social and economic issues in the decision making process. This policy does not require Sustainability testing.</p> <p>Policy and guidance in relation to design, energy efficiency, renewable energy and sustainable construction are principally set at the national and regional levels. There is no requirement for a specific Sustainability Appraisal of these policy areas at the Options Consultation stage. Nonetheless, design and character issues have been considered as part of the Housing Strategy Options, with several Options likely to necessitate higher density development. Design issues will be important to ensure that any adverse impact on settlement character is kept to a minimum.</p>

<p>Planning Obligations</p>	<p>This policy would seek to provide a basis for the Council seeking to secure financial contributions to off site works and infrastructure where that would be necessary to serve the development proposed, or where the development would put additional strain on local infrastructure and services.</p> <p>Clearly it is important to ensure that development that takes place is supported by infrastructure. Government guidance allows local authorities to seek financial contributions from developers, where a proposed development would result in the need for additional or enhanced infrastructure.</p>	<p>The alternative options for implementing this national guidance will have implications for the delivery of more sustainable development in South Bucks District. In particular, this policy will impact upon Sustainability Appraisal objectives relating to the accessibility of essential services and facilities and the use of sustainable transport.</p> <p>The various policy approaches that could be adopted are likely to have different implications (in terms of the facilities brought forward, and their location). In due course, these policy options will need to be the subject of Sustainability Appraisal.</p>
<p>Protecting and Enhancing the Natural and Built Environment</p>		
<p>Green Belt</p>	<p>This policy would seek to protect and, where possible, enhance the Green Belt. The fundamental aim of the Green Belt, as stated in PPG2, is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Within the Green Belt, there is a general presumption against inappropriate development.</p> <p>The protection of the Green Belt is a fundamental aspect of policy at regional and local level. Such protection is consistent with the Community Plan and is a major element of the Council's corporate aims.</p> <p>Some agricultural land and buildings are likely to become surplus to requirements due to changes in agricultural policy. We will need to set out appropriate uses locally and come to a view on the diversification of surplus land and buildings no longer needed for agriculture.</p>	<p>Local Planning Authorities are not required to justify national policies. However, the potentially significant sustainability effects of seeking to maintain the Green Belt have been noted in the assessment of the Core Strategy Options.</p> <p>In particular, efforts to maintain or enhance the Green Belt are likely to result in higher density development with existing settlements, and could well constrain future economic growth.</p>

<p>Landscape Protection</p>	<p>This policy will seek to protect high quality landscapes within the District, despite pressures on the countryside. The Government states that nationally designated areas, such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) should have the highest level of protection. There are currently two other types of local landscape designation in the District: Areas of Attractive Landscape and Local Landscape Areas.</p> <p>Large parts of the District are landscapes of high quality, which make an important contribution to the character of the area and to the quality of life of residents and others.</p> <p>The Government has advised local authorities to consider whether local landscape designations should be retained in their development plans or be replaced by policies based on landscape character.</p>	<p>Careful consideration will need to be given to which approach would do most to support Sustainability Appraisal Objective 7, relating to conserving landscape and townscape character.</p> <p>Any policy options should not impact upon the continued protection of the Chilterns AONB.</p>
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<p>Colne Valley Park</p>	<p>A large part of the District lies within the Colne Valley, a regional park located to the immediate west of Greater London. The Park includes parts of Surrey, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and the London Borough of Hillingdon. It is an area that has suffered to some extent from urban fringe problems, which also has other areas of landscape and nature conservation value, and which provides countryside recreation for adjacent urban populations. The Park is co-ordinated by the Colne Valley Partnership. The existence of a Regional Park helps halt the fragmentation of the Green Belt in this area.</p> <p>The Park has four key aims, and these are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• to maintain and enhance the landscape,• to safeguard the existing countryside from inappropriate development,• to conserve the nature conservation resources of the Park, and• to provide accessible countryside recreation facilities which do not compromise the first three aims. <p>This policy would seek to protect the Park in accordance with these four aims. The existing policy approach reflects the aims of the Partnership. It is not anticipated that there would be any change to the existing policy approach.</p>	<p>The merits of the Colne Valley Park designation, along with its key objectives, have already been assessed at the Regional level.</p> <p>In due course, the policy approach could be compared with a “do-nothing” scenario. Sustainability Appraisal would identify the likely implications of not retaining the Colne Valley Park designation.</p>
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<p>Damaged Land</p>	<p>Some Green Belt land has become damaged, particularly in the Colne Valley Regional Park, for example through mineral extraction or neglect. This policy would seek to ensure that these damaged landscapes are improved wherever possible so that residents and visitors within these areas enjoy a more acceptable quality of life.</p> <p>Being located to the immediate west of Greater London and adjacent to a number of other large urban areas such as Slough, the District has suffered from damage to the landscape character in some areas. The Council aims to strengthen the Green Belt by bringing about enhancements in accordance with PPG2, which identifies improving damaged and derelict land as one of the objectives of Green Belts once designated.</p>	<p>The Core Strategy Options Consultation document focuses on key issues. Several of the main Options would have implications for the remediation of damaged land.</p> <p>Further consideration will need to be given to the most effective means of facilitating the remediation of contaminated land, in tandem with the Preferred Options for accommodating future housing and employment growth.</p>
<p>Biodiversity</p>	<p>The protection of wildlife and nature conservation is also of vital importance in South Bucks. This policy would seek to protect and, where possible, enhance biodiversity in the District. It would also set out the current hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites.</p> <p>South Bucks has one National Nature Reserve (Burnham Beeches), which is also a Special Area of Conservation and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). There are seven other SSSIs, four Local Nature Reserves and a number of non-statutory County Wildlife Sites (CWS) in the District.</p>	<p>Policy in relation to SSSIs, National Nature Reserves and Special Areas of Conservation is set at the national level. There are no alternative options for implementation and these policies need not be the subject of Sustainability Appraisal.</p> <p>There are important issues associated with the Burnham Beeches SAC that have been raised in the Core Strategy Options Consultation document. If alternative Options are identified for addressing these issues, then they will need to be the subject of a Sustainability Appraisal.</p>

<p>Settlement Identity and Character</p>	<p>Many towns and villages in South Bucks have their own strong sense of local identity. This policy would seek to ensure that this character and 'sense of place' is cherished and not compromised by insensitive uses or poorly designed new development.</p> <p>Existing Local Plan policy has sought to concentrate development in the settlements excluded from the Green Belt. However, in more recent times Government policy in PPG3 is having an impact on the character of towns (and villages). One of the special qualities of the District is that it comprises a number of separate and distinctive settlements each with their own local character and sense of identity. It will be important to ensure that, as emphasised in PPG3, that development does not compromise the quality of the environment.</p>	<p>This policy area raises important sustainability issues for South Bucks District.</p> <p>The issue of settlement identity and character has been raised in the Core Strategy Options Consultation document. Indeed, design and character issues have been considered as part of the Housing Strategy Options, with several Options likely to necessitate higher density development in certain areas (with associated implications for settlement character).</p>
<p>Conservation and Heritage</p>	<p>This policy would set out the broad approach to the preservation and enhancement of the historic and prehistoric environment, including listed buildings, development within Conservation Areas and archaeological remains.</p> <p>South Bucks is an area rich in its historic environment. It has nearly 750 listed buildings and fifteen Conservation Areas. The Conservation Areas are currently being reviewed by the Council. There are also a number of Registered Historic Parks and Gardens and Scheduled Ancient Monuments in South Bucks.</p>	<p>Policy in relation to Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas is set at the national level. There is no requirement for Sustainability Appraisal at the Options Consultation stage.</p> <p>Conservation of the built form has been a key consideration in appraising the Housing Strategy Options. The potential requirement for higher density development could impact upon the setting of Listed Buildings and / or the quality of Conservation Areas.</p>

Infrastructure		
<p>Transportation Strategy</p>	<p>This policy would reflect the objectives of the Local Transport Plan.</p> <p>Planning has an important role to play in minimising the impact of transportation and promoting alternatives to the car, including public transport, walking and cycling. Much of the District is rural or semi-rural in character, and car dependency levels are high. Nevertheless, new development can be located in areas that are in close proximity to public transport. This policy will need to reflect the Local Transport Plan 2006-2011, the final version of which is still in the course of preparation prior to its final submission in March 2006.</p> <p>As far as practicable, transport movements in South Bucks will be focused on strategic routes, in order to provide the efficient, sustainable and safe movement of goods and passengers. The Council will work with the County Council in seeking to encourage traffic to use major routes for non-local journeys. The District will work with the County Council in seeking to reassess the role of the A355 south of the M40 when the A404 between the M40 and the M4 is further enhanced.</p>	<p>The Buckinghamshire LTP (and national guidance) will heavily influence the preferred Transport Strategy for South Bucks District. The Draft Buckinghamshire LTP has been subject to Sustainability Appraisal.</p> <p>In light of the above, it was not considered necessary to develop a range of options for inclusion in the Options Core Strategy Consultation document.</p>
<p>Public Transport</p>	<p>This policy would encourage the use of public transport in South Bucks.</p> <p>Whilst the District is not as well served by public transport as the larger urban areas in other parts of Buckinghamshire, it is still an aim of the County Council as the transport authority to secure an increase in the use of public transport as one of its means of seeking to tackle congestion. For example, the Council could require that relevant applications are supported by a Green Travel Plan.</p>	<p>It is not considered necessary to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal of any potential options to inform the Core Strategy Options Consultation document.</p> <p>Importantly, the Sustainability Appraisal of the Housing and Employment Strategy Options gives consideration to the location of development and access to public transport.</p>

<p>Railways</p>	<p>This policy would safeguard land immediately adjacent to the First Great Western railway line, which may need to be widened as a result of the Crossrail scheme.</p> <p>Crossrail is a major new railway that would link Maidenhead and Heathrow with central and east London. The Council supports the scheme in principle but has a number of more detailed concerns regarding it.</p>	<p>This Policy area relates to a National Transport Initiative. There are no alternative Options that require Sustainability Appraisal as part of the South Bucks Core Strategy Options consultation.</p> <p>However, the main implications of Crossrail are reported in the Core Strategy Options Consultation document.</p>
<p>Infrastructure and Community Facilities</p>	<p>This policy would set out the approach to the protection of existing infrastructure and community facilities and to the provision of new facilities. Permission for new development should not be given unless the necessary infrastructure (such as water, sewerage, gas and electricity) is adequate or could be provided in an acceptable way.</p> <p>The provision of infrastructure is fundamental to meeting the needs of the community. People's quality of life can be improved by having good access to local community facilities such as schools, health services, libraries and village halls.</p> <p>Such facilities are of particular importance to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, who may also be less mobile. The Council will produce an Infrastructure Study, which will examine the level of existing infrastructure and community facilities in the District. This will be published alongside the Core Strategy Preferred Options document as part of the evidence base.</p>	<p>This Policy area has important implications for sustainability. Access to facilities and services is identified as a key issue in the Core Strategy Options Consultation document.</p> <p>Access to facilities and services is a key tenet of sustainable development.</p>

Other Matters		
<p>Pinewood Studios</p>	<p>This policy would guide any proposals to regenerate or expand the film studios. The policy will encourage such proposals in principle, so long as they are consistent with the site's surrounding.</p> <p>Pinewood Studios is a nationally and internationally important site for the production of films. It is also an important local employer, although the site is not well served by public transport.</p>	<p>This Policy would relate to a specific site (Pinewood Studios).</p> <p>The alternative options for accommodating future growth and development of the Pinewood Studios site should be addressed in the Site Allocations Development Plan Document.</p>
<p>Gypsies and Travellers</p>	<p>This policy would set out the criteria against which applications for new or expanded Gypsy and Traveller sites will be assessed.</p> <p>There are four official Gypsy caravan sites in South Bucks, as well as a number of private sites. ACTVaR, the sub-regional local government association for Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, is currently undertaking a sub-regional needs assessment of Gypsy and Traveller Site Provision.</p>	<p>It is not possible to devise Options at this stage. The outcome of the Sub-Regional Needs Assessment should be awaited.</p>

<p>Pollution</p>	<p>This policy would set out the overall approach to developments that would have the potential to cause pollution, whether this is to land, air or water. Proposals that would give rise to unacceptable levels of such pollution, including noise and light, will not be permitted.</p> <p>An Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) was declared for corridors along the M25, M40 and M4 motorways in October 2004, in order to focus attention on those areas where air quality is at its lowest. The Council is committed to seeking to improve air quality, and is jointly working with other authorities to achieve this. However, whilst the Council, itself has little direct control over the air quality issues arising from the motorways, it is nevertheless appropriate for the core Strategy to provide a policy basis for the Council's discussions with the Highways Agency regarding this important issue.</p>	<p>Policy and guidance in relation to pollution control is principally set at the national level.</p> <p>There is no requirement for a Sustainability Appraisal of this policy area at the Options stage.</p> <p>Pollution issues were a key consideration in the Sustainability Appraisal of the Core Strategy Main Options.</p>
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<p>Water Resources</p>	<p>This policy would provide the overall approach to development that would affect water resources, including rivers, lakes, canals and ground water. It would also cover flooding.</p> <p>Parts of the District are within the floodplains of the Thames, Colne and Misbourne. It will be important to ensure that development does not take place in the floodplain where it would add significantly to the flood risk.</p> <p>It is not proposed that areas with a high risk of flooding will be shown on the key diagram. The Council considers that it would be more appropriate to show these on the proposals map, as they are liable to change. The Thames, Colne and the Grand Union Canal, including the Slough Arm, may offer some, albeit limited, opportunities to provide for enhanced recreational use.</p> <p>It will be important to ensure that development does not have an adverse impact on the underground supply of water resources. This may be more of an issue in relation to minerals extraction and waste disposal, but nevertheless it should be addressed in the Core Strategy.</p>	<p>Policy in relation to protection of water resources and flooding is set at the national and regional levels. It is not considered necessary to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal of this policy at the Options Consultation stage.</p>
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<p>Wilton Park</p>	<p>This would provide a strategic framework for the future use and development of the Wilton Park area to the east of Beaconsfield, particularly addressing the position should the land become surplus to MOD requirements.</p> <p>Wilton Park is owned by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and comprises the Defence School of Languages. The future of the site is under consideration by the MOD as part of the Defence Land Review. It is possible that the land could be declared surplus to MOD requirements as part of that Review.</p> <p>The area is wholly within the Green Belt, although two parts of the site (accommodating the main teaching areas, social and leisure facilities and some accommodation) are identified in existing policy as having the potential for redevelopment for an appropriate alternative use should the MOD vacate the site.</p>	<p>This Policy would relate to a specific site (Wilton Park).</p> <p>The alternative options for this site should be addressed in the Site Allocations Development Plan Document.</p>
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APPENDIX 6

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL OBJECTIVES

Additional text to accompany Table 1: Internal Compatibility of the SA Objectives

Note Number	Why Possibly Incompatible
1	If high levels of housing are needed this will involve greater use of water.
2	If it entails building in biodiversity rich areas.
3	If new development were needed on a scale where it could only be provided in the towns in such a way as to harm their character; or if development were to be provided in rural locations to the detriment of their landscape. Also if new development isn't sensitively designed.
4	If a decent home were to require inappropriate alterations to the internal layout of listed buildings; or if it were to require a standard which may be incompatible with the character of Conservation Areas.
5	If new dwellings need to be built to comply with SA objective 1 then there could be a potential conflict between these objectives. Unless all of the development takes place on previously developed land.
6	If sites for new development were in areas liable to flood.
7	If it were necessary to redevelop some employment land in order to meet housing needs.

8	If the most accessible sites are greenfield sites.
9	If the most accessible sites are located in the areas liable to flood.
10	If some greenfield sites were to be more sustainable in terms of transport than previously developed land.
11	Putting aside the issue of staff travelling to work, some companies are reliant on cars/lorries for the daily operation of their business (e.g. those which involve deliveries to other locations).
12	If locations for employment development are not well served by good public transport.
13	Economic growth is likely to result in an increase in water, car and energy use.
14	Renewable energies such as wind farms, change in agricultural uses and buildings could impact on the landscape character. Similarly, new eco-homes could have an impact on the character of the townscape within the towns.
15	If it were necessary to identify new sites for employment use, these could adversely impact upon either the townscape or the rural landscape.
16	New eco-homes could have an impact on the character of the historic environment.
17	If some of the buildings being reused were Listed Buildings or in Conservation Areas and the proposals for their re-use were to adversely affect their special character.

APPENDIX 7

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL OBJECTIVES OF THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK OBJECTIVES

Additional text to accompany Table 2: Testing the Plan Objectives against the SA Framework

Note Number	Why Possible Conflict?
E1	Could be pressure for new houses, which leads to pressure to develop the designated open spaces and recreational areas.
H1	If sufficient new homes were needed to necessitate development occurring in the Green Belt.
I1	It may be necessary to release some employment land to meet housing needs.
J1	If new development were needed on a scale where it could only be provided in the towns in such a way as to harm their character; or if development were to be provided in rural locations to the detriment of their landscape. Also if new development isn't sensitively designed.
L1	If sites for new development were in areas liable to flood.
D3	Could be the case that the most accessible sites in terms of transport are Greenfield sites.
E3	If making an area more accessible were to involve the provision of road building or rail line extensions then this might result in pressure to for example go across an open space.
L3	If the most accessible sites are also in the floodplain.
D4	In that some Greenfield sites may be more sustainable in terms of transport than previously developed land.
C5	If high levels of housing were to be needed as a result of LDF objective C then it might put a strain on the supply of water supplies in parts of the District.
C6	If it entails building further housing in biodiversity rich areas.

F6	If it entails building further housing in biodiversity rich areas.
C7	If new development were needed on a scale where it could only be provided in the towns in such a way as to harm their character; or if development were to be provided in rural locations to the detriment of their landscape. Also if new development isn't sensitively designed.
D7	If new development were needed on a scale where it could only be provided in the towns in such a way as to harm their character; or if development were to be provided in rural locations to the detriment of their landscape. Also if new development isn't sensitively designed.
F7	If it entails building further housing on a scale where it could impact on the character of the towns, or if development were to be provided in rural locations to the detriment of their landscape.
C8	If a decent home were to require inappropriate alterations to the internal layout of listed buildings; or if it were to require a standard which may be incompatible with the character of Conservation Areas.
D8	If some of the buildings being reused were Listed Buildings or in Conservation Areas and the proposals for their re-use were to adversely affect their special character.
J9	Renewable energies, such as wind farms, change in agricultural uses and buildings could impact on the landscape character. Similarly, new eco-homes could have an impact on the character of the townscape within the towns.
C11	Unless all development were to take place on previously developed land.
F11	If development were of a sufficient scale to necessitate releases of land from the Green Belt, then this would result in the loss of soil resources.
A12	Could be the case that the most accessible sites are Greenfield ones.
J12	If new development were needed on a scale where it could only be provided in the towns in such a way as to harm their character; or if development were to be provided in rural locations to the detriment of their landscape. Also if new development isn't sensitively designed.
M12	In that some Greenfield sites may be more sustainable in terms of transport than previously development land sites.
A13	If the most accessible sites are located in the floodplain.
C13	If sites for new development were in areas liable to flood.

I14	Economic growth means more car, water and energy use and consequently pollution.
E15	Encouraging economic growth is likely to result in pressure from both existing and new firms for sites for expansion. This could lead to pressure to develop on sites such as, for example, open spaces.
F15	Encouraging economic growth is likely to result in pressure from both existing and new firms for sites for expansion. This is likely to push up land prices and could therefore conflict with the objective of increasing the level of affordable and key worker housing in the District.
H15	Encouraging economic growth is likely to result in pressure from both existing and new firms for sites for expansion and this could result in development pressure being put on the Green Belt.
J15	If it were necessary to identify new sites for employment use, these could adversely impact upon either the townscape or the rural landscape.
M15	Economic growth is likely to result in an increase in water, car and energy use.
N15	Economic growth is likely to result in an increase in car and energy use and also lead to the production of more waste.
H16	Encouraging a diverse economy is likely to result in pressure from both existing and new firms for sites for expansion and this could result in development pressure being put on the Green Belt.
J16	If it were necessary to identify new sites for employment use, these could adversely impact upon either the townscape or the rural landscape.