

Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan (draft)

Sustainability Appraisal

SA Report

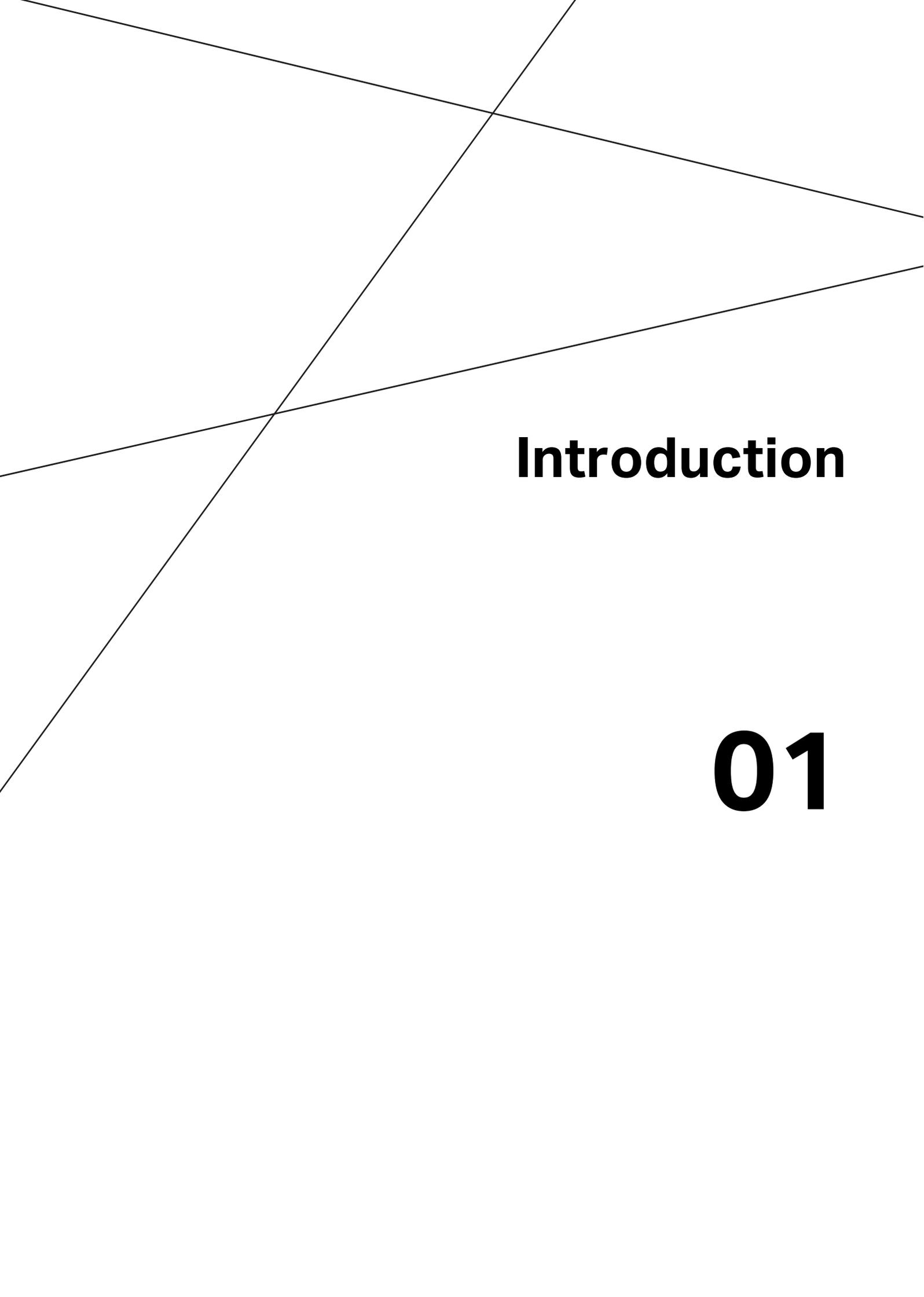
Non-Technical Summary

February 2018



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Introduction

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 AECOM is commissioned by the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Planning Group to undertake Sustainability Appraisal (SA) in support of the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan. SA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely significant effects of a draft plan, and alternatives, in terms of sustainability issues, with a view to avoiding and mitigating adverse effects and maximising the positives.
- 1.1.2 SA is not a legal requirement for a non-statutory document such as the Strategic Growth Plan. However, a Strategic Environmental Assessment is required given the scope of the Plan. The Strategic Planning Group consider that it is beneficial to widen the scope of the SEA to include social and economic factors. Therefore, a full SA is being prepared which incorporates the requirements of an SEA.
- 1.1.3 This document is a Non-Technical Summary of the main SA Report which appraises the implications of the Strategic Growth Plan, as well as documenting the SA process and outputs from previous stages of the plan-making process.
- 1.1.4 SA is a process for helping to ensure that Plans achieve an appropriate balance between environmental, economic and social objectives. SA should help to identify the sustainability implications of different plan approaches and recommend ways to reduce any negative effects and to increase the positive outcomes.
- 1.1.5 The Plan, once adopted, will provide a spatial strategy to help the Local Authorities within the Leicester and Leicestershire area to plan for new housing and employment needs across the housing market area.

1.2 Outline of the Plan

- 1.2.1 A draft Strategic Growth Plan has been established which sets out a spatial approach to the delivery of development in the long term (2031-2050). The key elements of the Plan are described below, with the strategic locations for growth illustrated on figure 1, which is reproduced from the draft Plan.
- 1.2.2 The Plan is focused on making the most out of future infrastructure improvements and key centres of economic growth opportunities. New housing (approximately 90,500 dwellings) is to be focused to the following locations, supported by the notion of large scale development with Garden Village principles.

Primary Growth Areas

- The A46 Corridor and Leicester City are critical areas for growth (highlighted orange on Figure 1).

Secondary growth areas

- The Southern and Northern Gateways (highlighted purple on figure 1) are also primary growth areas that will each support approximately 10,000 dwellings close to significant employment opportunities.

Key Centres

- Growth will be supported at Melton Mowbray and Lutterworth to help support new infrastructure, services and economic growth.

Areas of managed growth

- Development at Coalville, Loughborough, Hinckley and Market Harborough will be consistent with the need to support local growth.

Villages and rural areas

- There will be limited growth in these areas, consistent with providing for local needs.

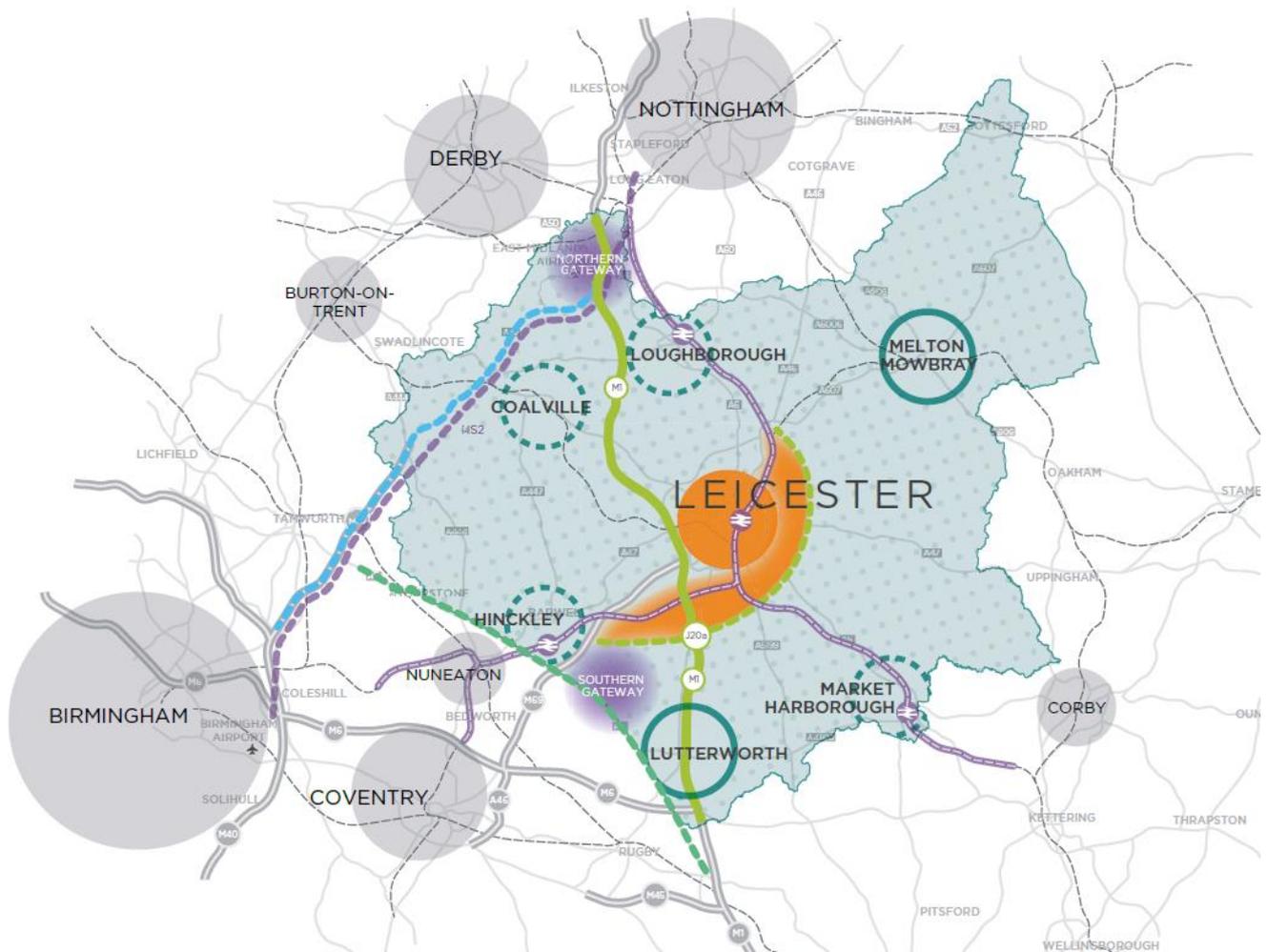
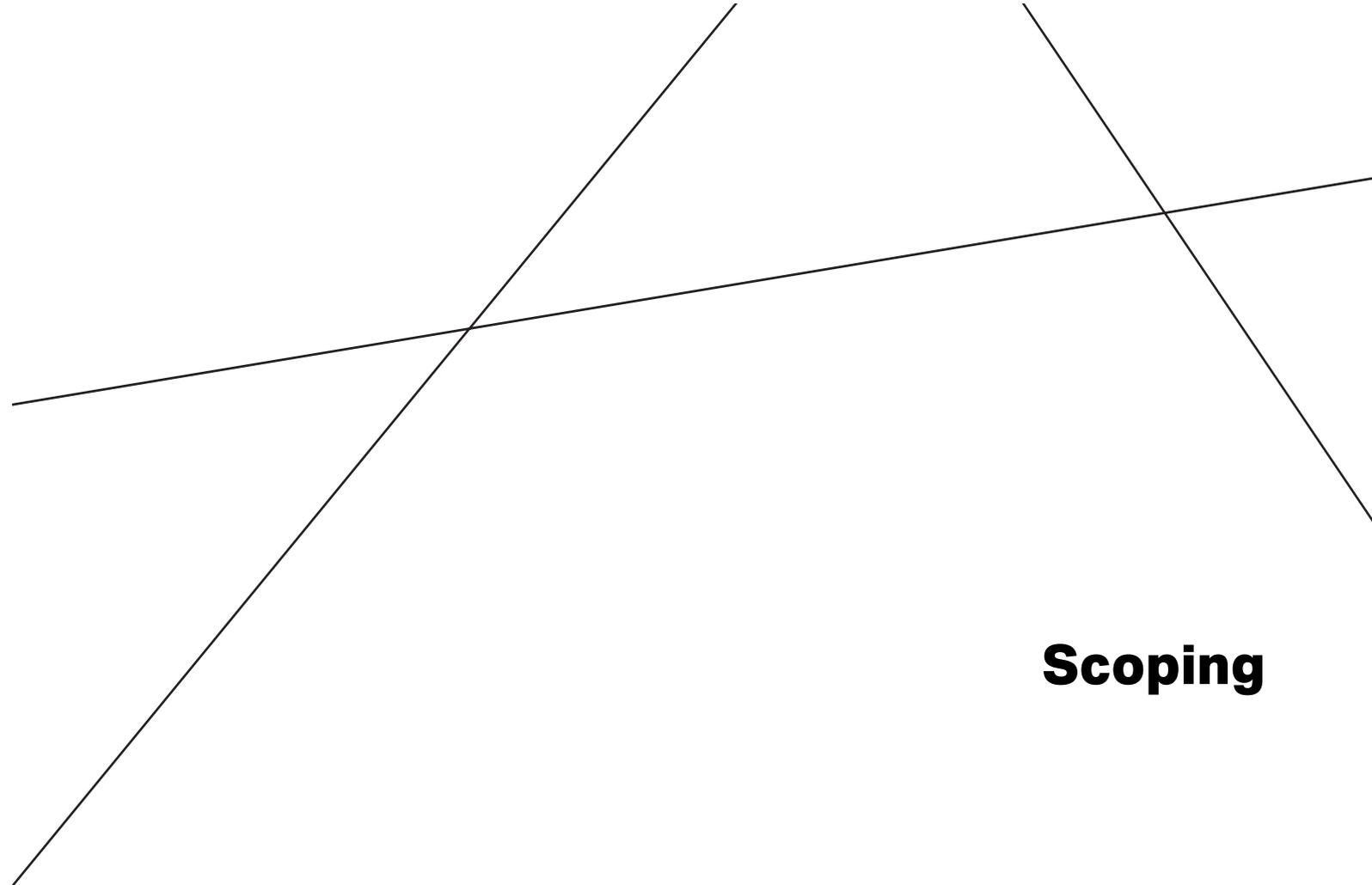


Figure 1: The draft Spatial Strategy

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Scoping

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2 SCOPING

2.1 Background

2.1.1 The scoping stage of sustainability appraisal involves the collation of evidence relating to the baseline position and policy context - culminating in a series of key issues that should be a focus for the SA and which helped to establish a sustainability framework. These key issues are summarised below; with the corresponding sustainability objectives identified (which form part of the SA framework).

2.2 Key issues

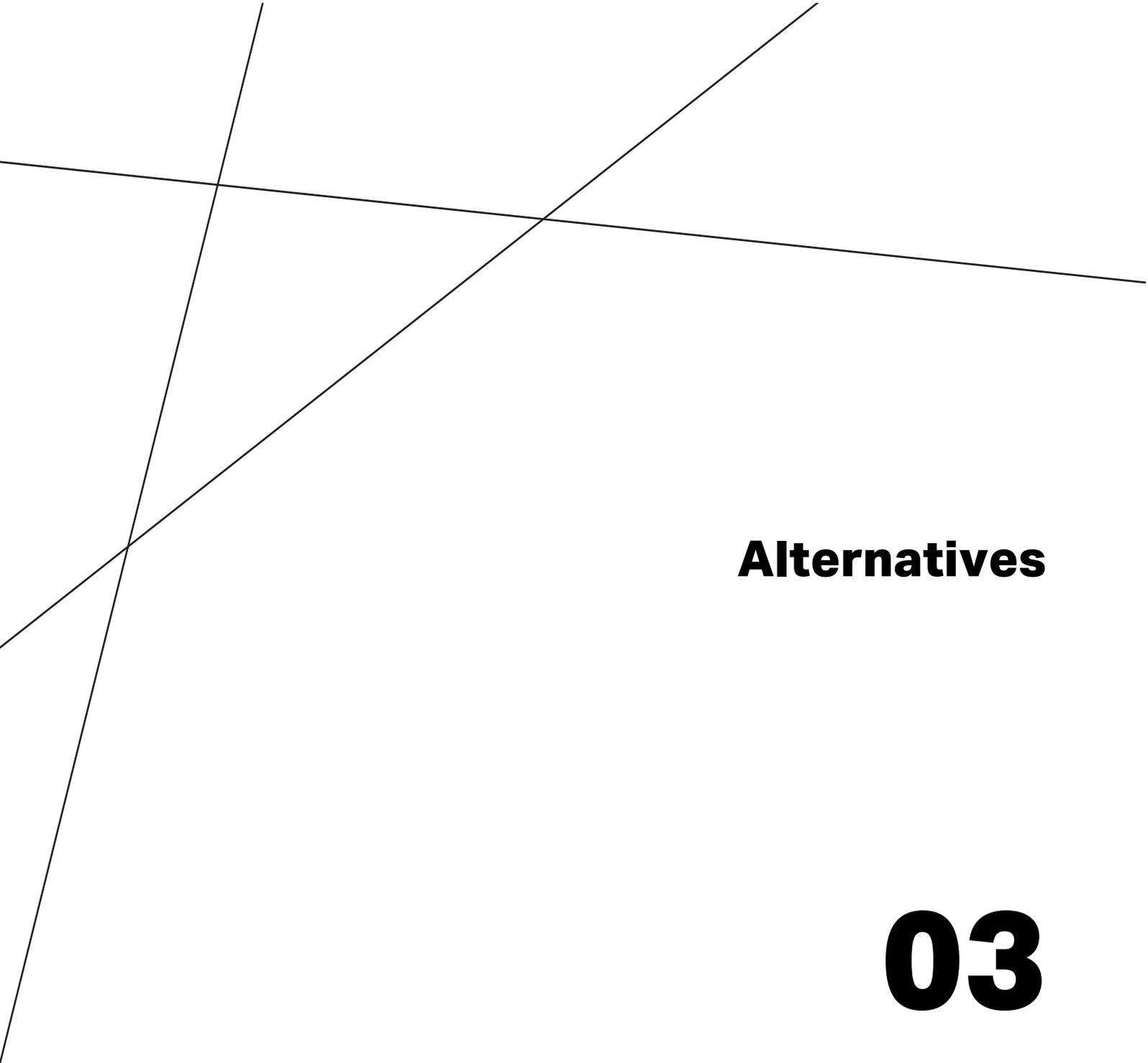
2.2.1 **Table 1** below sets out the Sustainability topics that were identified within the scoping report, the associated key issues, and the corresponding sustainability objectives. Where a decision was made that topics could be 'scoped out' of the SA, no SA objectives were developed.

Table 1: Key issues and the SA Objectives

Key issues	SA Objective
<p>Biodiversity and geodiversity</p> <p>The County has a relatively low level of designated biodiversity sites. However, these are in a mostly favourable or recovering position. Opportunities to strengthen ecological networks should therefore be taken advantage of.</p> <p>The quality of water could affect a range of biodiversity habitats and species across the County, making strategic river networks an important feature to protect, maintain and enhance.</p>	<p>1. Create new, protect, maintain and enhance habitats, species and ecological networks.</p>
<p>Health and wellbeing</p> <p>The population is ageing, with impacts for the delivery of health services.</p> <p>Also key issue due to rising ageing population is provision of sufficient and appropriate housing within the HMA / districts.</p>	<p>2. Maintain and improve levels of health, whilst reducing health inequalities</p>
<p>Housing</p> <p>There is a need to meet needs for housing as identified in the HEDNA (2017). In some districts it may be difficult to meet full needs 'locally' (i.e. within the district it arises). This could necessitate housing needs for some districts being met in other parts of the HMA.</p> <p>Housing affordability is an issues across the HMA. There is an increasing need to provide housing suitable for an ageing population.</p>	<p>3. Secure the delivery of high quality, market and affordable homes, to meet projected housing requirements.</p>

Key issues	SA Objective
<p>Employment and economy</p> <p>The County is well positioned for growth in the strategic distribution sector; though there is a need to identify the appropriate distribution of growth opportunities. Unemployment rates are falling across the HMA, though remain the highest within the city.</p>	<p>4. Support the continued growth and diversification of the economy.</p>
<p>Transport and travel</p> <p>Accessibility to services, facilities and jobs is poor in rural areas.</p> <p>Access to strategic employment sites by public transport is not ideal.</p> <p>There may be constraints to the amount of development that can be accommodated on the edge or near the Leicester urban area in light of congestion along parts of the orbital road network.</p>	<p>5. Improve accessibility to services, jobs and facilities by reducing the need to travel, promoting sustainable modes of transport and securing strategic infrastructure improvements.</p>
<p>Though generally good, air pollution presents an issue in some parts of the County, typically within areas that suffer from higher levels of traffic and congestion.</p>	<p>6. Minimise exposure to poor air quality, whilst managing contributing sources.</p>
<p>Climate change</p> <p>There are opportunities to increase the amount of low carbon and renewable sources of energy above the relatively low baseline position</p>	<p>7. Contribute to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and an increase in the use of low carbon energy.</p>
<p>Landscape and land</p> <p>There are parcels of high quality agricultural land throughout the district that should be protected given the relatively low amount of Grade 1 and 2 land present.</p> <p>No nationally designated landscapes are present. But there are a variety of important landscapes which are important to the character of the countryside, preventing urban sprawl and supporting the natural environment. Whilst these are in relatively good condition, there are increasing pressures for from development that need to be managed.</p>	<p>8. Protect, maintain and enhance landscapes whilst promoting their value to sustainable growth.</p> <p>9. Protect high quality agricultural land from permanent development.</p>

Key issues	SA Objective
<p>Cultural heritage</p> <p>There is a wealth and variety of heritage features, many of which are designated for their heritage value. It will be important to protect the condition and setting of these assets. There may be cross border heritage assets.</p> <p>Though the number of 'at risk heritage assets has decreased slightly from 2015-2017, the majority of heritage assets that remain on the 'at risk' register are declining in condition.</p>	<p>10. Conserve and enhance the historic environment, heritage assets and their settings.</p>
<p>Water</p> <p>The quality of many water resources across the County is in need of improvement, yet could come under increased pressure from new development. SUDs should be encouraged to support the natural and sustainable management of water resources.</p> <p>There are areas across the County that are sensitive to and at risk of flooding (which could be exacerbated by climate change). There is a need to ensure that future development does not put more people at risk of flooding whilst ensuring that overall levels of flooding do not increase. This could/should constrain development in some areas, such as the flood plains of the River Soar and watercourses leading to and through Leicester City.</p>	<p>11. Steer development away from the areas at the greatest risk of flooding, whilst supporting schemes that reduce the risk and impacts of flooding.</p> <p>12. Protect, maintain and enhance the quality of water resources.</p>
<p>Waste and minerals</p> <p>Levels of recycling, reuse and composting are relatively high, and rates continue to improve. There has also been a general decrease in the amount of waste per capita.</p> <p>Growth in housing and employment is likely to generate more waste in terms of the overall volume. However, improved efficiency and continued drives to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill should help to reduce the amount of waste generated per capita.</p> <p>There are mineral resources across the County, some of which could be sterilised by development. It is important to protect such reserves from sterilisation.</p>	<p>Waste – Scoped out. The trends are generally positive, and the planning for growth ought to be managed through the Leicester and Leicestershire Waste Plans.</p> <p>13. Protect mineral resources from sterilisation, and support their sustainable extraction.</p>

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Alternatives

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3 ALTERNATIVES

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 Stage 2 of the SA/SEA process involves identification and assessment of 'reasonable alternatives'. This means comparing different approaches that could be taken to achieve the objectives of the Plan; which in this case relates to whether there are different options for delivering housing growth from 2031-2050.

3.2 Identifying alternatives

- 3.2.1 The Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Planning Group explored several alternatives to the amount and distribution of growth. These are discussed below:

Amount of growth

- 3.2.2 Two levels of growth have been tested in the SA. The first is based on a projection of housing needs for the period 2011-2036. This would equate to an approximate notional requirement for new homes over the period 2031-2050 of 90,500 homes.
- 3.2.3 A higher target (20% more than notional projected housing requirements) has also been tested to account for greater flexibility in achieving housing delivery and to support greater economic growth aspirations.
- 3.2.4 A lower level of growth than notional projected housing requirements is considered to be an unreasonable alternative. While there are constraints within and across Leicester and Leicestershire, these are not of such scale and importance, either individually or collectively, to prevent notional housing requirements being accommodated in a sustainable way.

The distribution of development

- 3.2.5 The Strategic Planning Group established a range of options for the distribution of housing and employment. This work has been influenced by a range of factors including emerging evidence on growth opportunities, progress on individual authorities' Local Plans to 2031 or 2036, and options explored and tested as part of the Local Plan processes.
- 3.2.6 Six reasonable alternatives were established setting out the amount of growth that would be distributed to key locations across the HMA. Each of the reasonable alternatives involve differing levels of housing growth in each area to represent a greater or lesser focus on each of the broad strategies.

Option 1: Focus on the Leicester Urban Area - Emphasise development in and immediately around the built framework of Leicester, with growth elsewhere constrained.

Option 2: A greater focus on Market Towns - Emphasise development in and immediately around the market towns of Coalville, Hinckley, Loughborough, Market Harborough and Melton Mowbray, with growth elsewhere constrained.

Option 3: Employment / Infrastructure led - Emphasise development in the vicinity of known economic growth areas and associated infrastructure investment, with growth elsewhere constrained.

Option 4: New / Expanded settlements - Emphasise the option of growth being accommodated via new and expanded settlements, with constraints on growth in other key settlements and the urban area of Leicester.

Option 5: Dispersed growth

Option 6: Continuation of established trends

Combining growth and distribution Options

- 3.2.7 In order to give the appraisal greater context and meaning, the two housing growth scenarios were combined with each of the six spatial options. This allowed for a broad understanding of effects to be identified for each of the spatial options, and how these effects would differ should the level of growth be higher or lower.
- 3.2.8 This combination resulted in twelve discrete options that have been tested in the SA.
- 3.2.9 As outlined in tables 2 and 3, each of the options involve different amounts of growth in the City, Leicester Urban Periphery, Market Towns, 'other settlements' and at new/expanded settlements.

Table 2: Six reasonable alternatives at the notional projected housing requirement growth scenario (90,500 dwellings)

	1a.PUA focus	2a.Market Towns focus	3a.Employment/ infrastructure led	4a.New/expanded settlements focus	5a.Dispersal	6a.Trend
<i>City</i>	20% 18,100	10% 9,050	10% 9,050	10% 9,050	10% 9,050	25% 22,625
<i>Leicester Urban periphery</i>	40% 36,200	15% 13,575	30% 27,150	15% 13,575	20% 18,100	25% 22,625
<i>Market towns</i>	20% 18,100	60% 54,300	45% 40,725	15% 13,575	30% 27,150	30% 27,150
<i>Other settlements</i>	20% 18,100	15% 13,575	15% 13,575	10% 9,050	40% 36,200	20% 18,100
<i>New/expanded settlements</i>	0%	0%	0%	50% 45,250	0%	0%

Table 3: Six reasonable alternatives at the higher growth scenario for flexibility (108,600)

	1b.PUA focus	2b.Market Towns focus	3b.Employment/ infrastructure led	4b.New/expanded settlements focus	5b.Dispersal	6b.Trend
<i>City</i>	20% 21,720	10% 10,860	10% 10,860	10% 10,860	10% 10,860	25% 22,625
<i>Urban periphery</i>	40% 43,440	15% 16,290	30% 32,580	15% 16,290	20% 21,720	25% 27,150
<i>Market towns</i>	20% 21,720	60% 65,160	45% 48,870	15% 16,290	30% 32,580	30% 32,580
<i>Other settlements</i>	20% 21,720	15% 16,290	15% 16,290	10% 10,860	40% 43,440	20% 21,720
<i>New/expanded settlements</i>	0%	0%	0%	50% 54,300	0%	0%

3.3 Hybrid option

3.3.1 Following the appraisal of the twelve reasonable alternatives, the Council developed a hybrid option, which took different elements of some of the approaches tested. The hybrid option was appraised alongside the original alternatives to allow for a comparison of the preferred strategy with these options.

3.3.2 The Hybrid Option formed the basis of the draft Plan strategy and distributes housing as follows:

- Leicester City – 10, 450 dwellings
- Urban periphery – 4,500 dwellings
- Market Towns – 18,100 dwellings
- Other Settlements – 9,050 dwellings
- New/expanded settlements – 48,000 dwellings (A46 corridor, Southern / Northern Gateways)

3.4 Methodology

3.4.1 The appraisal has been undertaken and presented against each of the ten sustainability topics established through scoping.

3.4.2 For each of the SA topics an appraisal table has been completed which discusses the likely effects for each option (see the SA Report). An overall score for each option is derived from an appraisal and understanding of the effects across the HMA in different spatial contexts. These 'building blocks' for each option are as follows (in-line with how the alternatives have been established):

- Effects on the City
- Effects on the Urban Periphery (PUA)
- Effects on Market Towns
- Effects on 'other (rural) settlements'
- Effects at new settlements / expanded settlements.

3.4.3 These individual elements are then considered together to establish an overall score for each option against the SA Objectives. A summary of the overall scores is provided in this non-technical summary.

3.4.4 When determining the significance of any effects, a detailed appraisal of factors has been undertaken to take account of:

- the nature and magnitude of development;
- the sensitivity of receptors; *and*
- the likelihood of effects occurring.

3.4.5 Taking these factors into account allowed 'significance scores' to be established using the system outlined below.

Major positive	✓✓✓	Minor negative	×	Neutral / negligible effects	-
Moderate positive	✓✓	Moderate negative	××	Uncertain effects	?
Minor positive	✓	Major negative	×××		

3.4.6 The assessment has been undertaken making-use of baseline information presented in the scoping report and mapping data. Whilst it has not been possible to identify exact effects due to sites not being established at this stage, we have made assumptions on the potential locations of development by referring to SHELAA sites and potential opportunity areas identified by the Strategic Planning Group. There is a focus on strategic impacts at a settlement-level, rather than detailed local effects. Whilst every effort is made to make objective assessments, the findings are also based upon professional judgement and are therefore partly subjective.

3.5 Summary of appraisal findings

3.5.1 Table 4 (page 18) presents the overall scores recorded for all twelve of the reasonable alternatives (i.e. the six distribution options at both scales of growth). A summary of the findings is discussed in this section.

Notional projected housing requirements (90,500 dwellings)

3.5.2 A dispersed approach is the least balanced overall; having the most negative effects for three sustainability objectives (transport and travel, landscape and land, cultural heritage). Therefore, despite having very positive effects for housing and health and wellbeing, it would be unlikely to achieve sustainable development.

3.5.3 From a social and economic perspective, the hybrid option appears to perform the best overall, as it is the only option that generates a major positive effect on both housing and economy without generating negative effects. The next best performing option is option 3, which also generates significant positive effects for housing and economy, but could generate some negatives. All other options would still generate positive effects on social and economic factors, but to a lesser extent.

3.5.4 However, despite performing well in terms of social and economic factors, option 3 would have more negative effects on land and landscape and cultural heritage compared to options 1, 2 and 4. Those options are not without their own difficulties though, with option 2 performing worst of all options in terms of biodiversity and option 4 performing worst of all options in terms of water. The hybrid option, on the other hand, is one of the better performing options with regards to environmental protection, despite potentially significant effects on landscape.

- 3.5.5 It is clear that the overall performance of options 1, 2, 3 and 4 is fairly similar in terms of sustainability 'as a whole'. However, each approach has more merits or issues for different aspects of sustainability.
- 3.5.6 What can be concluded from this appraisal is that option 5 should not form a major element of the spatial strategy. However, there is still merit to dispersing some growth as demonstrated by positive effects on health and housing associated with option 5.
- 3.5.7 It is also clear that the hybrid option best meets the economic aspirations of the growth strategy and supports housing in accessible locations whilst performing as well as any other option in terms of environmental protection objectives.

Higher growth options

- 3.5.8 With a 20% increase in housing to allow for 'flexibility', the broad trend for all options is for the negative effects to become more prominent across the HMA, whilst the positive effects do not increase as consistently or by the same magnitude.
- 3.5.9 For option 1, despite an improvement in the housing and economic factors, the effects on multiple environmental factors would become majorly negative and could be difficult to mitigate. There could also be major negative effects upon health and wellbeing.
- 3.5.10 The picture is similar for options 2 and 3, which would both see major negative effects for landscape and land and heritage, as well as more significant negative effects in terms of congestion, infrastructure and potential intrusion into minerals safeguarded areas.
- 3.5.11 Option 2 would have the most prominent negative effects on biodiversity at this level of growth compared to all other options (the same as for the lower growth scenario).
- 3.5.12 Option 3 would still remain the most positive with regards to the economy, even at this higher level of growth.
- 3.5.13 Option 4 would perhaps be best placed to accommodate even greater levels of growth, as the negative effects generated would be less significant compared to the other options. Nevertheless, the overall pattern is one of exacerbated negative effects on environmental factors compared to the notional projected housing requirement.
- 3.5.14 For option 5, major negative effects are also predicted for a range of environmental factors, including a rise in the significance of effects for water, biodiversity, climate change and minerals. The positive effects only rise in significance for transport and travel, as increased growth in rural areas could help to support/improve accessibility and services.
- 3.5.15 Option 6 would also see an increase in negative effects for many sustainability factors. The exception is an increase in significance of the positive effects on housing and economy.
- 3.5.16 For the higher growth scenario, option 5 does not score as badly in comparison to the other options; with it only scoring the poorest for climate change at this scale of growth. This is due to the negative effects of each other option rising at the higher level of growth.
- 3.5.17 The hybrid option was not tested at the higher level of growth as the preferred scale of growth is the housing needs figure not the higher projection.

3.6 Outline reasons for the selection of the preferred approach

- 3.6.1 The Strategic Planning Group has come to a decision on the emerging preferred approach based upon a range of factors including; national policy, regional priorities for the economy and infrastructure investment, the need to protect local environmental and historic assets, and the findings of the SA process (presented in an interim SA Report).
- 3.6.2 Whilst none of the original reasonable alternatives have been taken forward in their entirety, the preferred approach does reflect elements of each option where they are in accordance with the preferred strategy. For example, option 5 is rejected in terms of the focus on rural settlements, but the level of growth at the City and the market towns for this option is broadly the same as the preferred approach.
- 3.6.3 The draft Plan has been developed to take advantage of significant new infrastructure capacity that is close to the anticipated key economic growth points. The A46 corridor represents an excellent opportunity to accommodate housing growth close to and with good transport links into the City, where anticipated job growth requires a workforce well in excess of that likely to be accommodated within Leicester and the urban periphery. Growth along this corridor is anticipated to help reduce the length of journeys to work, improve the prospect of non-car journeys and create additional jobs associated with the new housing areas in the corridor.
- 3.6.4 It is anticipated that a large amount of growth would be accommodated at new / expanded settlements. Consequently, the broad approach of option 4 has formed the basis for the growth strategy (but also drawing from elements of the other distribution options as appropriate).
- 3.6.5 In the Southern Gateway area the new/expanded settlements will also be accessible to job opportunities and the location is crossed by the Leicester-Nuneaton rail line providing good accessibility. Substantial numbers of new jobs are anticipated in the Southern Gateway location, in addition to the infrastructure investment to provide the M69/M1 link section of the newly routed A46.
- 3.6.6 In the Northern Gateway area the homes are again likely to be in new settlements and expansions to existing urban areas such as Loughborough / Shepshed. Given the relationship between housing and employment, it is considered appropriate to locate housing growth close to employment growth generated by Loughborough, the strategic rail freight interchange and HS2 interchange, and growth of the airport
- 3.6.7 The strategy sets an appropriate level of growth in Leicester City, which represents the current assessment of maximum capacity in the City from the period 2031-2050. Planning for greater levels of growth here is considered likely to stifle the capacity for employment growth (office, retail, leisure) and could also have greater potential for effects on biodiversity, health and wellbeing due to the loss of open space. Consequently, options 1 and 6 which both propose substantially higher levels of growth in the City are considered to be inappropriate in this respect.
- 3.6.8 Planning for lower levels of growth in the City (rather than maximising potential) is considered to be unreasonable given the ongoing shortage of homes and the inability to meet fully objectively assessed housing needs. Furthermore, the SA does not identify any significant issues with regards to the level of growth proposed in the City.
- 3.6.9 The level of growth focused at the market towns is considered to be appropriate given that there are already significant developments in the pipeline for these areas up to 2031 and beyond. At Loughborough / Shepshed, the Northern Gateway will also increase

development opportunities in this location. Focused growth at the other market towns would not take full advantage of economic opportunities and strategic infrastructure upgrades. Consequently, options 2 and 3, which focus substantial growth to the market towns, are considered less attractive in this respect.

- 3.6.10 The level of growth proposed at the rural settlements is limited, and reflects the strategic focus on larger-scale opportunities in more accessible locations. Consequently, options 5 and 6, which propose substantial dispersal of growth, are considered to be unattractive in this respect.
- 3.6.11 The SA findings broadly support the preferred strategy, as it would generate the most benefits in terms of employment and housing growth. The focus of growth at key areas of economic growth and infrastructure capacity is also likely to reduce the length of car trips, and encourage sustainable modes of travel (particularly where there are strong rail and bus links into the City). In terms of environmental effects, the preferred approach does not generate any major negative effects and performs better or the same as the alternatives in this respect.
- 3.6.12 The role of the Strategic Growth Plan is to establish broad preferred locations for longer term growth and thus to provide a framework for statutory local plans. The broad locations would evidently be able to accommodate a range of different growth levels, so if subsequent work based on updated evidence confirms that a higher level of growth ought to be pursued in certain locations, then this can be considered at that stage and the impacts analysed accordingly. What is clear at this stage is that a higher level of growth (than the notional projected housing requirement) will have largely negative impacts. This is supported by the SA findings which suggest that the negative effects for every option would be likely to increase, and this could lead to major negative effects on the built and natural environment, water, and transport infrastructure.

Table 4 - Summary of appraisal scores for the twelve reasonable alternatives plus the hybrid option

		Biodiversity	Health & wellbeing	Housing	Economy	Transport	Climate change	Landscape and land	Heritage	Water	Minerals
Option 1 <i>PUA Focus</i>	1a	x	✓✓✓xx	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓/x	✓/?	x	xx/✓✓	x	-
	1b	xx	✓✓✓xxx	✓✓✓	✓✓✓/x	✓✓/xx	✓/x	xxx	xxx/✓✓	xxx	x
Option 2 <i>Market town focus</i>	2a	xx	✓✓xx	✓✓	✓✓/x	✓✓/xx	✓✓	x	xx/✓	x	x
	b	xxx	✓✓xxx	✓✓	✓✓✓/xx	✓✓/xxx	✓	xxx	xxx/✓	xxx	xx
Option 3 <i>Employment-led</i>	3a	x	✓✓✓xx	✓✓✓	✓✓✓/x	✓✓/xx	✓✓	xx	xx/✓	x	-
	b	xx	✓✓✓xxx	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓/xxx	✓	xxx	xxx/✓	xx	x
Option 4 <i>New settlements</i>	4a	x	✓✓xx	✓✓	✓✓	✓/xx	✓	x	x/✓	xx	?
	4b	xx	✓✓✓xxx	✓✓	✓✓✓/x	✓/xxx	-	xx	xx/✓	xx	x
Option 5 <i>Dispersal</i>	5a	x [?]	✓✓✓x	✓✓✓	✓✓/x	✓/xxx	x	xxx	xxx/✓	x	x
	5b	xx [?]	✓✓✓xx	✓✓✓	✓✓/xx	✓✓/xxx	xx	xxx	xxx/✓	xxx	xx
Option 6 <i>Trends</i>	6a	x	✓✓✓x	✓✓	✓✓	✓/x	✓/?	xx	xx/✓✓	x	?
	6b	xx	✓✓✓xx	✓✓✓	✓✓✓/x	✓/xx	-/x	xxx	xxx/✓✓	xxx	x
Hybrid option		x	✓✓✓/xx	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓/xx	✓	xx [?]	x/✓	x	?



Appraisal of the draft Plan

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4 APPRAISAL OF THE DRAFT PLAN

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 This section presents a summary of the appraisal of the draft Plan considered 'as a whole'.
- 4.1.2 Whilst there are no policies as such proposed within the Plan (to support the spatial approach to development), it contains a range of broad principles that provide a framework for how growth should be delivered.
- 4.1.3 The key principles are:
- A focus on large scale sustainable developments.
 - The need to deliver the principles of the Garden City Concept.
 - The need to protect the built and natural environment.
 - Taking advantage of strategic infrastructure improvements.

4.2 Methodology

- 4.2.1 The appraisal was based upon the SA Framework, which consists of ten SA Topics, with supporting objectives and guiding questions.
- 4.2.2 When determining the significance of any effects, a detailed appraisal of factors has been undertaken to take account of:
- the nature and magnitude of development;
 - the sensitivity of receptors; *and*
 - the likelihood of effects occurring.
- 4.2.3 Taking these factors into account allowed 'significance scores' to be established using the system outlined below. Major and moderate effects are considered to be significant, whilst minor effects are not.

Major positive	✓✓✓	Minor negative	×	Neutral / negligible effects	-
Moderate positive	✓✓	Moderate negative	××	Uncertain effects	?
Minor positive	✓	Major negative	×××		

- 4.2.4 The assessment has been undertaken making-use of baseline information presented in the scoping report and mapping data. Whilst it has not been possible to identify exact effects due to sites not being established at this stage, we have made assumptions on the potential locations of development by referring to SHELAA sites and potential opportunity areas identified by the Strategic Planning Group. There is a focus on strategic impacts at a settlement-level, rather than detailed local effects. Whilst every effort is made to make objective assessments, the findings are also based upon professional judgement and are therefore partly subjective.

4.3 Summary of appraisal findings

4.3.1 **Table 5** below presents a summary of the effects associated with the draft Plan. There is particular emphasis on identifying whether effects are significant or not.

4.3.2 Also presented is a range of potential monitoring measures to check whether positive effects are actually occurring or unforeseen negative effects arise.

Table 5 - Summary of Plan effects including potential monitoring measures.

SA Topic	Potential monitoring measures
<p>Biodiversity</p> <p>Uncertain negative effects are predicted overall relating to the potential for localised effects on habitats and species as a result of large scale development. However, these effects are not predicted to be significant given the avoidance of the most sensitive areas and the focus on a Garden City concept.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Net loss/gain in designated habitats (ha). • Ecological enhancement schemes delivered at strategic sites. • Ecological water quality. • Establishment of a green infrastructure strategy.
<p>Health and wellbeing</p> <p>A significant positive effect is predicted for health and wellbeing due to the potential to improve access to health services, community facilities and affordable housing.</p> <p>Minor negative effects are identified with regards to a loss of open space and potential increase in air quality issues in the City.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Net change in open space provision. • Number of new health care facilities delivered. • Access to local green space. • Change in levels of deprivation in the top 20% areas. • Achievement of air quality objectives
<p>Housing</p> <p>A significant positive effect is predicted overall for housing. This reflects the support for affordable and market housing in areas of need that are well located to employment opportunities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rates of housing delivery. • Percentage of affordable housing delivered. • Availability of land for strategic development opportunities in the key locations.
<p>Economy and employment</p> <p>Significant positive effects are predicted for the economy and employment as the strategy seeks to help deliver and take advantage of infrastructure and economic growth opportunities. Housing growth is focused to areas that have good access to jobs, and ought to support increased local spending, provide jobs in construction, and provide accommodation for a growing workforce.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gross Added Value Leicester and Leicestershire. • Unemployment rate. • Retention of working age population. • Changes in the levels of deprivation. • Change in numbers of people employed by sector

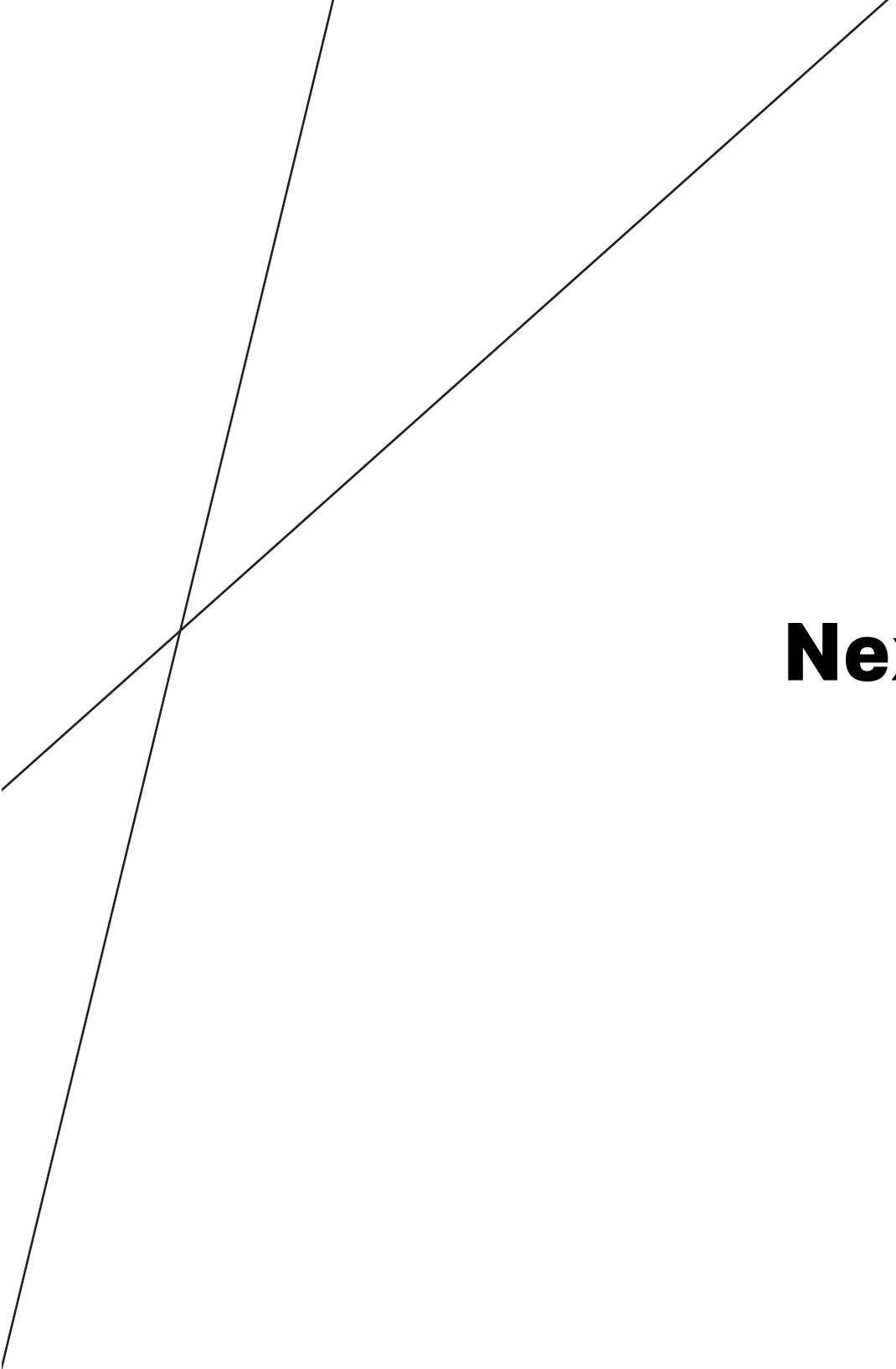
SA Topic	Potential monitoring measures
<p>Transport and travel</p> <p>The Plan is predicted to have mixed effects on transport and travel.</p> <p>The close proximity of new homes to employment opportunities ought to reduce the length of travel. The focus on new settlements should also ensure that new communities have good access to local facilities and services. A significant positive effect is predicted in this respect.</p> <p>However, substantial growth around the City could put additional pressure on orbital routes and in and out of the Leicester. This could have minor negative effects in terms of congestion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number and proportion of homes within walking distance of key public services, recreational opportunities and public transport services. • New / expanded public transport services secured through strategic development. • Average annual traffic flows. • Average trip length to access employment.
<p>Climate change</p> <p>The Plan is predicted to have a minor positive effect overall, reflecting a potential reduction in emissions from transport by directing the majority of growth to areas with good accessibility.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in the amount of carbon emissions generated from transport (per capita).
<p>Landscape and land</p> <p>The Plan is likely to have minor negative effects with due to the likely loss of best and most versatile agricultural land.</p> <p>With regards to landscape character, an uncertain moderate negative effect is predicted overall, though significant effects could occur along the A46 corridor depending upon the location and layout/design of development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amount of best and most versatile agricultural land lost to development by grade. • Number of allotments established at strategic development sites. • Landscape character assessments to identify sensitive parcels of land at key growth areas.
<p>Cultural heritage</p> <p>The Plan is predicted to have both minor positive effects and minor negative effects on heritage.</p> <p>There is the potential for the character of settlements to be affected by large scale development and a loss of open space.</p> <p>Development in Leicester City in particular presents opportunities to enhance heritage assets that are currently in poor condition. The avoidance of negative effects across much of the Plan area is also a positive factor.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of or change in the significance of designated heritage assets. • Townscape and landscape character assessments. • Amount of derelict land restored (ha). • Heritage assets removed or added from the 'at risk' register. • Net loss/gain of open space in Leicester City.

SA Topic	Potential monitoring measures
<p>Water</p> <p>The draft Plan is predicted to have a minor negative effect overall, reflecting the potential for some development to be in areas at risk of flooding and an increase in the demands on water treatment infrastructure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of new development within flood zones 2 and 3. SUDs schemes incorporated into new developments.
<p>Minerals</p> <p>An uncertain negative effect is predicted as it is possible that new development in the areas identified for growth could overlap with Minerals Safeguarded Areas (particularly for sand and gravel).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amount of development within Minerals Safeguarding Areas (ha). Potential sterilisation of minerals at strategic development sites.

4.4 Mitigation and Enhancement

4.4.1 Where significant effects are identified, measures to mitigate these have been suggested if possible. Further measures to enhance the positive effects of the Plan have also been suggested where possible. The following measures have been identified at this stage.

- It would be beneficial for a green infrastructure strategy to be developed to identify how links between the City and the A46 corridor could be strengthened, ensuring that wildlife habitats are better connected. The Plan could commit to the preparation of a joint strategy to enable such opportunities to be explored and taken advantage of.
- In order to mitigate potential negative effects in terms of increased congestion and effects on air quality from vehicles, it would be beneficial to highlight a commitment to establishing the infrastructure to support electric vehicles. This would set a clear steer for Local Authorities to promote such infrastructure at strategic sites in particular.
- The Plan acknowledges rural areas as being nationally significant for agriculture and food production. However, there is no explicit strategy for the rural areas. By focusing growth away from the rural areas though, the Plan does offer a degree of protection for these industries. However, additional positive effects could be generated by setting a policy framework that supports the protection, diversification and modernisation of rural businesses.
- Clearly investment in infrastructure will play a crucial role in the successful delivery of the strategy and minimization of negative effects. This is acknowledged in the draft Plan. There are no specific measures identified at this stage.
- The Plan is mostly silent on the issue of climate change, with no strategic approach being proposed to help move towards a zero carbon economy. Given the proposed concentration of growth at a series of large scale developments (which ought to be more viable for decentralised energy schemes), the Plan ought to set out a commitment to achieving low carbon development and explore how separate developments can be linked together to create better opportunities for sustainable developments. Whilst Local Plans would be the more appropriate vehicle for exploring opportunities, it would be beneficial to outline the intent in the Strategic Growth Plan.



Next Steps

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5 NEXT STEPS

- 5.1.1 The Strategic Planning Group has identified a preferred approach for the scale and distribution of development in the long term for Leicester and Leicestershire. The Plan also contains a number of key principles to guide growth.
- 5.1.2 The draft Plan is being consulted upon during the period 11th January 2018 – 5th April 2018. Responses can be submitted with regards to the Plan, and supporting evidence (including this SA Report) by completing a consultation questionnaire online at the following web address.
- www.lstrategicgrowthplan.org.uk/the-plan/stage-two/how-to-comment/
- 5.1.3 Alternative formats, including paper copies of the consultation questionnaire are available on request by contacting one of the local authorities direct. Or by email at : strategic.growthplan@leics.gov.uk
- 5.1.4 The SA Report has been prepared to document the SA process that has been undertaken to inform the draft Plan, including an assessment of reasonable alternatives.
- 5.1.5 Following the consultation period on the draft Plan a final version of the Plan will be prepared. This will take account of consultation feedback, the findings and recommendations of the SA (as set out in this report) and any significant changes to the evidence.
- 5.1.6 The group hopes to publish the final version of the Strategic Growth Plan by Summer / Autumn 2018. At this stage, an updated SA Report will be prepared to reflect any changes that are made.

