



Forest of Dean District Council **LOCAL PLAN**

2021-2043

Sustainability Appraisal

Further Interim Report for the Local Plan Options to Deliver the Additional Housing
Requirement July 2025 (Regulation 18)



Forest of Dean
— DISTRICT COUNCIL —

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I. Introduction: About the Sustainability Appraisal

A sustainability appraisal is a systematic process that must be carried out during the preparation of local plans and spatial development strategies. Its role is to promote sustainable development by assessing the extent to which the emerging plan, when judged against reasonable alternatives, will help to achieve relevant environmental, economic and social objectives.

This process is an opportunity to consider ways by which the plan can contribute to improvements in environmental, social and economic conditions, as well as a means of identifying and mitigating any potential adverse effects that the plan might otherwise have. By doing so, it can help make sure that the proposals in the plan are appropriate given the reasonable alternatives. It can be used to test the evidence underpinning the plan and help to demonstrate how the tests of soundness have been met. Sustainability appraisal should be applied as an iterative process informing the development of the plan.

PPG Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 11-001-20190722

The Purpose of a Sustainability Appraisal and Stages

- I.1 The purpose of a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is to promote sustainable development through the integration of environmental, social and economic considerations in the preparation of Local Plans. It ensures that the principles of sustainable development are applied to planning policies, allocations and guidance, and provides a framework for decision making through the Plan drafting stage.
- I.2 This report has been prepared in response to Section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 which requires a local planning authority to carry out a SA for each of the proposals in a Local Plan during the preparation of the plan. The Sustainability Appraisal stages are shown at Figure 1 and SA reports published and proposed are set out in Table 1 at the end of this report. The SA stages are:

Stage A: Setting the context & objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope (i.e. The scoping study) - THIS IS DISCUSSED IN THE ACCOMPANYING SA FOR THE DRAFT LOCAL PLAN 2024 .

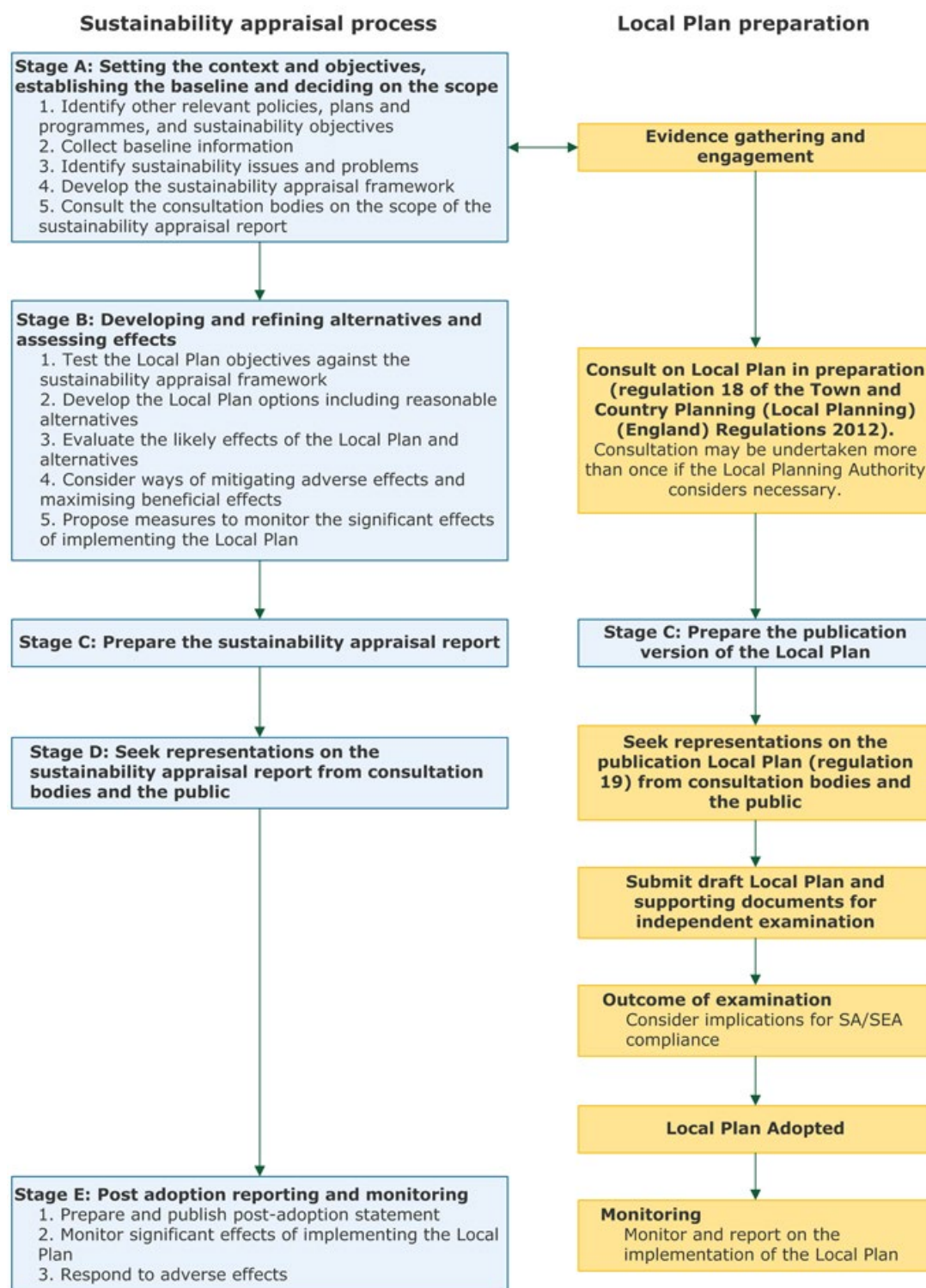
Stage B: Development and refining alternatives and assessing effects - UPDATED IN THIS FURTHER INTERIM SA REPORT.

Stage C: Preparing the Sustainability Appraisal Report – THE SA IS UPDATED IN AN ITERATIVE MANNER AND THE RELEVANT SECTIONS PUBLISHED AT EACH PERTINENT STAGE OF THE PLANNING MAKING PROCESS, NAMELY AT CONSULTATION POINTS.

Stage D: Consulting on the Local Plan and Sustainability Appraisal report – THIS COMES INTO EFFECT DURING PUBLIC CONSULTATION.

Stage E: Post adoption reporting and monitoring

Fig. I Sustainability Appraisal Process



What is the purpose of this current SA and why are the plan options being revisited?

- I.3 This report is the Sustainability Appraisal which sits alongside the Forest of Dean Regulation 18 “**Local Plan Options to Deliver the Additional Housing Requirement July 2025**” paper in preparation for public consultation in Summer 2025.
- I.4 There have been significant changes in the past 6 months which have led to the need to revisit the plan options:

Changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) and consequences

- I.5 Within four weeks of the General Election held on 4th July 2024, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) undertook a consultation on proposed revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This consultation ran from 30th July to 24th September 2024 and set out proposed measures for planning reform.
- I.6 The revised Framework was published on 12th December 2024, aimed at tackling the countries entrenched housing crisis and to stimulate economic growth. The most notable change to the NPPF being the way in which Local Housing Need (LHN) is calculated by Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) and making it mandatory. As a result of the revisions to the Standard Method (SM) calculation, Forest of Dean District (FODD) has seen an uplift of 82% in its LHN. Prior to the December 2024 revision of the NPPF, the Council had (using the previous Standard Method) a LHN of 330 new dwellings per annum, equating to 6,600 over the 20-year plan period. Further to the December 2024 amendments to the Standard Method, the Council now needs to meet a new LHN need of 600 per annum, or 12,000 over the 20-year plan period.
- I.7 In consideration of this uplift, the agreed Local Plan strategy was considered unlikely to be capable of delivering a housing requirement to meet this need. As such it was considered necessary to review the draft plan development strategy and explore what other potential strategic options may exist so that the district may meet its housing need.
- I.8 In addition, revised wording at paragraph 78 of the Framework adds further pressure on the Council to deliver the required need. It states that deliverable sites should include a buffer of either 5 or 20% of additional housing (depending on circumstances). This again reflects the government’s push towards a higher housing requirement. Once more, it highlights the importance of the Council progressing with the preparation of a local plan that seeks to deliver the revised local housing need as soon as possible. The combination of an older local plan with outdated housing policies, along with a current housing land supply of 1.93 years (as calculated up to 31st December 2024), leaves the Council very exposed to speculative development, often in the least sustainable or even unsustainable locations, and lacking quality of design.
- I.9 Finally, it was also judged to be the appropriate time to consider extending the plan period from 2041 to 2043 in order to ensure that the plan covers at least 15 years post adoption (as per the NPPF stipulations). However, this obviously results in having to find housing allocations for the additional 2 years, resulting in a having to plan for an additional 1,200 houses (13,200 overall up to 2043).

- 1.10 In conclusion, the reason the plan options are being revisited at this stage is because the last adopted Preferred Option Strategy (selective expansion of existing settlements) no longer meets the new local housing need requirements (borne out of the revisions to the updated NPPF December 2024). Therefore, the housing objectives of the Local Plan have been significantly modified in this regard and the SA must therefore acknowledge this and revisit all options to find the most sustainable option to accommodate the increased housing need.

Local Plan Vision

- 1.11 The District's Vision and Objectives (<https://www.fdean.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/developing-our-new-local-plan/emerging-local-plan-issues-and-options/>) have not changed since 2019 when originally adopted and are still considered relevant. They seek a situation where:

- Young people can find jobs;
- Older people are supported as they age;
- Tourism and new businesses can grow and prosper;
- The community is healthy and active;
- There is a high quality built and natural environment to be protected; and
- Pursue a low carbon future and seek new development to be designed to adapt to climate change.

Local Plan's Vision

Forest Of Dean Local Plan Vision

- The district is actively engaged in pursuing a low carbon future and new development is designed to enable this while being able to adapt to climate change.
- In 2041 younger people are more likely to want stay in the district with good access to education, employment and housing.
- The needs of an ageing population have also been incorporated into the design of new development.
- It is a place where healthy lifestyles are an everyday part of living and working in the district.
- The implementation of sustainable development enhances the quality of life for residents and visitors alike.
- The diverse landscapes and heritage of the area is so distinctive that it is nationally and internationally recognised.
- A thriving tourism market is underpinned by a high quality natural and built environment.
- The lack of affordable housing has been addressed through imaginative and sustainable ways providing an appropriate range of tenures which support local communities, services and facilities.
- The area has resilient and diverse employment opportunities with strong links to good local schools embracing, in particular, industries of the future.
- The district is better connected through improved transport, digital and mobile data connections which reduce the need to travel and provide a distinctive local offer.
- The Forest of Dean is known as an amazing place to start and grow business.

2. Scoping and Baseline Information and SA Reports to date

- 2.1 Several previous SA reports have been published alongside the previous Regulation 18 consultations, which demonstrate the process so far and what baseline information has already been collected. This section of the report signposts the reader to those previous stages of the plan-making process as well as the accompanying SA reports and provides any relevant updates:

Scoping Report

- 2.2 The original SA Scoping Report was published in 2020 and consulted upon in 2022 (<https://www.fdean.gov.uk/media/rxkb4zmg/sustainability-appraisal-scoping-report.pdf>) and (<https://www.fdean.gov.uk/media/y42ipqzx/sa-scoping-consultation-report-final.pdf>). The SA Report – Interim Report for Draft Local Plan (Summer 2024) (<https://www.fdean.gov.uk/media/or1lbuwp/sustainability-appraisal-july-2024-for-draft-local-plan-2021-to-2041.pdf>) summarised and updated the Scoping Report by reporting relevant changes to both the policy and sustainable context at that time. The majority of that data remains relevant at this current stage, with the exception of a few more updates since Summer 2024:

Policy Changes since Summer 2024

- 2.3 The NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) was updated in December 2024. The resulting changes to the Standard Method has resulted in an 82% uplift in local housing need (LHN) for the Forest of Dean. This has a significant impact on how this amount of housing (600 pa/12,000 over a 20 year plan period) is sustainably accommodated.
- 2.4 Taking into account the need for a plan which covers at least 15 years post adoption (given that adoption is likely to be in 2027), it is currently proposed to extend the plan period from 2021-2041 to 2021-2043, which therefore results in the need to plan for an addition 1,200 houses (13,200 overall up to 2043).
- 2.5 Other more localised changes have been the making of the Forest Edge South Neighbourhood Development Plan as well as the Dymock Neighbourhood Development Plan.

SA Method and SA Framework – as per the Scoping Report 2020

- 2.6 Overall the “Sustainability problems/issues” as discussed in the original Scoping Report (2020) remain reasonable and relevant. These include:

Environment – Landscape, Ecology, Water, Carbon Management, Air, Waste, Heritage

Society – Housing, Education, Community Well Being, Local Identity

Economy - Employment, Business and Enterprise, Transport and Infrastructure, Retail Centres

- 2.7 Furthermore, the original Scoping Report put forward a framework of 12 SA objectives which have been reviewed and are still considered to be relevant at this time. These have been used as the basis to appraise the sustainability of the Alternative Options and are as follows:

Table 1: SA Objectives

| SA objective – as per the Scoping Report | Criteria |
|---|---|
| 1. To improve the health and well-being of the populations and reduce inequalities in health. | Does the policy support healthy living? Does the policy minimise adverse effects to health, e.g. road accidents, crime? |
| 2. To meet local housing needs, by ensuring everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent sustainably constructed and affordable home. | Does the policy provide for a mix of housing types and sizes to meet the needs of different sections of the community? Does the policy support the provision of affordable housing? |
| 3. To provide accessible community services, recreation and leisure facilities. | Does the policy support ease of access to key services, including education, health, retail and recreation? Does the policy support the use of public transport to access key services? Does the policy help to reduce dependence on the car? |
| 4. To facilitate the development of academic and vocational skills. | Does the policy provide improved access to educational facilities? |
| 5. To create a more vibrant and sustainable local economy. | Will the policy encourage an increase in the range of employment opportunities? Does the policy support opportunities for higher paid and professional employment? |
| 6. To protect and enhance the landscape. | Does the policy protect and enhance the landscape including the countryside, areas of landscape value, river valleys and green space? Does the policy provide access to areas of landscape value? Does the policy promote high quality design in keeping with the character of the area? Does the policy protect good quality agricultural land? |
| 7. To conserve and enhance biodiversity, flora and fauna. | Does the policy support no net loss to biodiversity? Does the policy promote biodiversity net gain? Does the policy contribute to the protection of designated areas? Does the policy strengthen connectivity between wildlife habitats and promote Green Infrastructure? |
| 8. To maintain and improve air quality. | Does the policy provide opportunities to travel by public transport? Does the policy reduce congestion? |
| 9. To maintain and improve water quality and to achieve sustainable water resources management. | Does the policy seek to conserve water resources and increase water efficiency? Does the policy seek to improve the water quality of rivers, lakes and ground water? |

| | |
|---|---|
| 10. To reduce carbon emissions that cause climate change and to achieve net zero. | Does the policy support energy conservation and energy efficient design? Does the policy reduce vulnerability of the built environment to the effects of climate change (e.g. flooding, extreme events) and promote carbon net zero development? |
| 11. To reduce waste generation and achieve sustainable management of waste. | Does the policy support opportunities to reduce waste going into landfill? Does the policy reduce waste generation and achieve sustainable management of waste? |
| 12. To safeguard historical and cultural assets. | Does the policy maintain and enhance cultural and historical assets? |

Issues and Options (2019) and Preferred Options (2020)

2.8 The Issues and Options Consultation 2019 and Preferred Options Consultation 2020 did not have accompanying SA papers. The First Preferred Option was a combination of Selected Planned Expansion of Existing Settlements and Planned New Settlement(s).

Second Preferred Options (2022)

2.9 The Second Preferred Option was Selected Planned Expansion and its public consultation (Autumn 2022), whilst not formally required, had an accompanying SA Appraisal for Potential Large Strategic Sites only. <https://www.fdean.gov.uk/media/uh4lgltx/sustainability-appraisal-for-potential-large-strategic-sites.pdf>

Draft Local Plan 2024

2.10 The Draft Local Plan Consultation of Summer 2024 included an SA Report - Interim Report for Draft Local Plan public consultation Summer 2024. This included a full SA report, technical summary and appendices of the assessments of the draft plan policies and potential allocation sites:

<https://www.fdean.gov.uk/media/orl1buwp/sustainability-appraisal-july-2024-for-draft-local-plan-2021-to-2041.pdf>

<https://www.fdean.gov.uk/media/5quc0ptp/non-technical-summary-of-sa-for-draft-local-plan-2021-to-2041.pdf>

<https://www.fdean.gov.uk/media/elij5qur/appendix-1-sa-of-development-sites-for-draft-local-plan-2021-to-2041-v2.pdf>

<https://www.fdean.gov.uk/media/0fmiy0fp/appendix-2-sa-of-draft-plan-policies-for-draft-local-plan-2021-to-2041.pdf>

2.11 The agreed strategy for the Draft Local Plan 2024 was Selective Planned Expansion of Existing Settlements which included strategic sites in Lydney, Newent and Beachley Camp as well as providing allocations in the most sustainable village locations.

- 2.12 Consultation responses were collated at each stage, particularly including those which related to the Sustainability Appraisal documents and the emerging Local Plan has been revised at each stage to take into account these representations.

HRA (Habitats Regulation Assessment)

- 2.13 A Habitats Regulations Assessment is a vital component of the plan-making process. The Draft Local Plan 2024 was subject to a Habitats Regulations Assessment, as set out in the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended), and this can be accessed at: <https://www.fdean.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/developing-our-new-local-plan/draft-local-plan-2041/>
- 2.14 The Sustainability Appraisal takes into account the findings of the Habitats Regulations Assessment and it should also be noted that SA Objective No. 7 “To conserve and enhance biodiversity, flora and fauna.” of the Framework aims to ensure that likely effects on protected species and habitats in designated areas are assessed adequately at a strategic level. Furthermore, individual Sustainability Appraisal site assessments delve deeper into potential impacts.

3. Appraisal of Revised Alternative Options

- 3.1 The SA Framework and Methodology for carrying out the appraisals of the various alternative Options has remained comparable and consistent across each of the stages of the SA work carried out so far.
- 3.2 Most of the Options (1, 3-6) assessed in this current SA document have been **‘revisited’** from previous stages of the SA work with the exception of one new Option (Option 2).

Revisiting the Options and any additional Options

- 3.3 The table below sets out the appraisal of each of the options, with the Ratings Key providing a guide to how the potential sustainability of each option has been considered.

Ratings Key:

| | |
|----|---------------|
| ++ | Very positive |
| + | Positive |
| 0 | Neutral |
| - | Negative |
| -- | Very negative |

Table 2: Options Appraisal

| SA Objective: | Option 1: Selective planned expansion of existing settlement(s). | Option 2: General distribution of housing around all existing settlements (planned sharing of the housing numbers across all settlements). | Option 3: Maximum incremental change to the extent of absolute constraints. | Option 4: Planned New Settlement(s). | Option 5: Negotiated agreement that some development will be passed to adjoining Authority(ies) | Option 6: Combination of Option 1 (Selective planned expansion of existing settlement(s)) and Option 4 (Planned New Settlement(s)) |
|--|--|---|---|---|---|--|
| 1. To improve the health and well-being of the populations and reduce inequalities in health. | <p>+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sites would be in closer proximity to existing health services and encourage active travel (healthy living). Can also promote/support healthy living and reduce inequalities more readily because of better selection of more sustainable sites. More potential to better design out crime and risks of accidents. | <p>0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed outcome. Some sites would be near existing health services, however, others (particularly at the numerous smaller more rural settlements) would not be in close proximity. Less potential to select most sustainable sites, to design/connect up active travel routes (for healthy living) or to masterplan and therefore less opportunity to design out crime and risk of accidents. | <p>-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unlikely sites would be near existing health services. Little potential to improve health and wellbeing and reduce inequalities owing to inability to masterplan for development or to select the most sustainable sites. Equally, little potential to design out crime and risks of accidents. | <p>+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Master plan can ensure sites would be in closer proximity to existing health services and create services within the new settlement. Can also promote/support health living and reduce inequalities more readily because of masterplanning. Active travel can be designed into new settlement (improving healthy living) and there is more potential to better design out crime and risks of accidents. | <p>Ranges (spatially) between - and 0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development outside the district may provide some sites which would be near existing health services in the neighbouring authorities, particularly if the development was sited in/near a larger settlement with a wider range of facilities. However, development outside the district would not improve the health and well-being of the population living within the FoD. Less potential to select most sustainable sites, to design/connect up active travel routes (for healthy living) or to masterplan and therefore less opportunity to design out crime, risk of accidents. | <p>++</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There would be existing health facilities nearby as well as newly planned ones. Can also promote/support healthy living and reduce inequalities more readily because of better selection of more sustainable sites as well as masterplanning for the new settlement element. More potential to better design out crime and risks of accidents. Better potential to design a scheme which includes active travel routes (for healthy living). |
| 2. To meet local housing needs, by ensuring everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent sustainably constructed and affordable home. | <p>+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can plan to deliver the necessary housing numbers, incl. affordable with a mix of housing types and sizes to better meet the needs of different sectors of the community and thus reduce inequalities. | <p>0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing numbers could be accommodated across the district, however, owing to the fact that many of the housing locations would be small sites, this may not provide as many affordable housing units as larger sites or provide a sufficient mix of housing types and sizes to reduce inequalities. | <p>+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can deliver the necessary housing numbers, incl. affordable with potential to provide a mix of housing types and sizes to better meet the needs of different sectors of the community and thus reduce inequalities. | <p>++</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can plan to deliver the necessary housing numbers on a larger scale, incl. affordable homes with a mix of housing types and sizes to better meet the needs of different sectors and thus reduce inequalities. | <p>- -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development outside the district would not provide local housing within the FoDD, including affordable housing. Would not provide for a mix of housing types and sizes to meet the needs of different sections of the community. | <p>++</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can plan to deliver the necessary housing numbers on a larger scale, incl. affordable and provide a mix of housing types and sizes to better meet the needs of different sectors of the community and thus reduce inequalities. |
| 3. To provide accessible community services, recreation and leisure facilities. | <p>+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can plan to deliver the services in sustainable locations, to take | <p>0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed outcome. Some sites would be near existing facilities to take advantage of | <p>-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unlikely that there will be existing services nearby or that they will be provided for | <p>+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can plan to deliver the key services (such as education, health, retail and | <p>- -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development outside the district offers no benefits or scope to support existing | <p>+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can plan to deliver the services in sustainable locations, and/or to take |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| | <p>advantage of existing facilities nearby, such as education, health, retail and recreation. Thus reducing dependence on the car and encouraging use of public transport.</p> | <p>them and reduce dependence on the car (or increase use of public transport). However, others (particularly at the numerous smaller more rural settlements) would not be in close proximity. Less scope for planning delivery of such facilities.</p> | <p>by developers. As such, this option would not help reduce dependence on the car or support the use of public transport to access key services.</p> | <p>recreation) and support ease of access to access them through masterplanning. Also allows for better design of services to be more easily accessible through the use of public transport, thus reducing reliance on the private car.</p> | <p>recreation/leisure services or create new ones within the FoDD. Public transport is unlikely to be improved, thereby resulting in no reduction in reliance on the private car.</p> | <p>advantage of existing facilities nearby and reduce dependence on the car. Better potential for schemes to be designed so the key services are more easily accessible through the use of public transport.</p> |
| <p>4. To facilitate the development of academic and vocational skills.</p> | <p>+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can plan to deliver the educational services required and/or improve access to existing educational facilities. | <p>0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed outcome. Some sites would be near existing educational facilities, however, others (particularly at the numerous smaller more rural settlements) would not be in close proximity. Less scope for planning delivery of such facilities and for improving access to them. | <p>-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less likely that there will be existing services nearby or that they will be provided for by developers, thereby limiting the potential to improve access to educational facilities. | <p>+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can plan to deliver the educational services required and/or improve access to existing educational facilities. | <p>Ranges (spatially) between - and 0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development outside the district may provide some sites which would be near existing educational facilities or even provide better access to new ones in the neighbouring authorities, particularly if the development was sited in/near a larger settlement with a wider range of facilities. | <p>+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can plan to deliver the educational services required and/or improve access to existing educational facilities. |
| | | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • However, development outside the district would not improve the educational facilities for the FoDD or improve access to them. | |
| <p>5. To create a more vibrant and sustainable local economy.</p> | <p>+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Near existing facilities and services, providing more footfall for existing local economy and encouraging new businesses. Increased potential for providing an increased range of employment opportunities, including higher paid and professional. | <p>0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development may support existing services or potentially create new businesses, but this is highly dependent on the location and the developer. Some limited potential for providing an increased range of employment opportunities, including higher paid and professional. | <p>0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development may support existing services or potentially create new businesses, but this is highly dependent on developer. Some limited potential for providing an increased range of employment opportunities, including higher paid and professional. | <p>+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can plan to deliver the services. Can include home-working. Increased potential for providing an increased range of employment opportunities, including higher paid and professional. | <p>- -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development outside the District offers no benefits or scope to support existing services or create new ones within the FoDD. Very little potential to provide an increased range of employment opportunities, including higher paid and professional within the district. | <p>+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can plan to deliver the services. Can include home-working. Increased potential for providing and increased range of employment opportunities, including higher paid and professional. |
| <p>6. To protect and enhance the landscape.</p> | <p>0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sites with less impact on the landscape may be | <p>-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Given the rural nature of the district, many of the smaller | <p>- -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sites are likely to be in the most sensitive landscape areas with little or no | <p>-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sites are likely to be in countryside locations, | <p>+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development outside the District is less likely to cause | <p>-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sites may be in countryside locations, however, effect can |

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|--|--|---|---|--|--|---|
| | <p>chosen, however, there may not be much choice if settlements are already up against statutory forest or other designated areas. But there would be a backdrop of existing development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This option would provide more potential for access to areas of landscape value, promotion of high-quality design in keeping with the character of the area, and protection/enhancement of the landscape. • Also potential to avoid sites which have the most agricultural land value (thus protecting Best Most Versatile Land). | <p>settlement sites are likely to be in countryside locations. Development in small to very small settlements may appear out of scale and character and therefore won't protect/enhance the landscape.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less potential to protect good quality agricultural land (BMVL) | <p>mitigation measures. This option is less likely to promote high quality design in keeping with the character of the area and less likely to protect/enhance the landscape and areas of landscape value.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little potential to protect good quality agricultural land (BMVL) | <p>however, effect can be mitigated through design and landscaping with the aim of protecting landscape value.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good quality agricultural land (BMVL) may be negatively impacted. | <p>harm to the local FoDD landscape, with the exception of potential sites on/near the neighbouring authority's border with the FoDD. Therefore this option has good potential to protect good quality agricultural land and to protect/enhance the landscape and areas of landscape value.</p> | <p>be mitigated through high-quality design and landscaping with the aim of protecting landscape value</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good quality agricultural land (BMVL) may be negatively impacted. |
| 7. To conserve and enhance biodiversity, flora and fauna. | <p>+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can plan to reduce and mitigate any impacts, supporting no net loss to biodiversity and promoting biodiversity net gain. Sites can be selected and designed to strengthen connectivity between wildlife habitats and GI where possible. | <p>0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little opportunity to reduce wide-scale impacts, which makes it difficult to conserve biodiversity, but may be able to mitigate on a piece-meal basis (Biodiversity Net Gain on a small scale). Less ability to plan/design for connectivity between wildlife habitats and promote GI. | <p>0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little opportunity to reduce wide-scale impacts, which makes it difficult to conserve biodiversity, but may be able to mitigate on a piece-meal basis (Biodiversity Net Gain on a small scale). Less ability to plan/design for connectivity between wildlife habitats and promote GI. | <p>++</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can plan to reduce and mitigate any impacts supporting no net loss to biodiversity and promoting biodiversity net gain. Opportunities to create greater net gain and green infrastructure, strengthening connectivity between wildlife habitats. | <p>+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development outside the District is less likely to cause harm to the local FoDD ecology, with the exception of potential sites on/near the neighbouring authority's border with the FoDD. However, it does not provide opportunity to promote biodiversity net gain or to strengthen connectivity between wildlife habitats and promote GI within the district. | <p>+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can plan to reduce and mitigate any impacts supporting no net loss to biodiversity and promoting biodiversity net gain. Opportunities to create greater net gain and green infrastructure, strengthening connectivity between wildlife habitats. |
| 8. To maintain and improve air quality. | <p>0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and traffic generation causes air quality issues through increased traffic and congestion. However, potential to select sites with improved | <p>-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and traffic generation causes air quality issues through increased traffic congestion. • Less potential to select sites with improved opportunities to travel by public transport. | <p>-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and traffic generation causes air quality issues through increased traffic congestion • Less potential to select sites with improved opportunities to travel by public transport. | <p>0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and traffic generation causes air quality issues through increased traffic congestion • However, opportunities through masterplanning to create opportunities to travel by public transport. | <p>+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development outside the District is less likely to increase traffic generation, congestion, and cause subsequent air quality issues within the FoDD, with the exception of potential sites on/near the neighbouring | <p>0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and traffic generation causes air quality issues through increased traffic congestion • However, opportunities through masterplanning to create opportunities to travel by public transport. |

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| | opportunities to travel by public transport. | | | | authority's border with the FoDD. | |
| 9. To maintain and improve water quality and to achieve sustainable water resources management. | <p>0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is dependent on the measures taken for each individual site, but has potential to ensure development has the ability to conserve water resources, increase water efficiency and improve water quality as much as possible. | <p>0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is dependent on the measures taken for each individual site, but has potential to ensure development has the ability to conserve water resources, increase water efficiency and improve water quality as much as possible. | <p>0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is dependent on the measures taken for each individual site, but has potential to ensure development has the ability to conserve water resources, increase water efficiency and improve water quality as much as possible. | <p>0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is dependent on the measures taken for each individual site, but has potential to ensure development has the ability to conserve water resources, increase water efficiency and improve water quality as much as possible. | <p>+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development outside the District is more likely to conserve water resources within the FoDD, and impact less on water quality in the District with the exception of potential sites on/near the neighbouring authority's border with the FoDD. | <p>0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is dependent on the measures taken for each individual site, but has potential to ensure development has the ability to conserve water resources, increase water efficiency and improve water quality as much as possible. |
| 10. To reduce carbon emissions that cause climate change and to achieve net zero. | <p>0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited opportunity for large scale strategic carbon offset measures, but some scope for planned local small-scale measures to support energy conservation and energy efficient design to reduce effects of climate change (can ensure housing is sustainably constructed with low/zero carbon emissions through the implementation of high-quality design and planning policy/design guidance). | <p>0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited opportunity for large scale strategic carbon offset measures, but some scope for planned local small-scale measures to support energy conservation and energy efficient design to reduce effects of climate change (can ensure housing is sustainably constructed with low/zero carbon emissions through the implementation of high quality design and planning policy/design guidance). | <p>- -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carbon emissions would be significant as there has been no planned approach to how development will include strategic and local carbon offset to support energy conservation and reduce vulnerability to climate change. Individual properties could however be sustainably constructed with low/zero carbon emissions through the implementation of high quality design and planning policy/design guidance. | <p>Ranges (temporally) between - and ++</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initially, carbon emissions would be greater given the remote countryside location and lack of services. But carbon emissions can rapidly decline once the infrastructure is fully embedded. Masterplanning allows for large-scale design for energy conservation and efficiency through high quality design and can introduce measures such as large-scale net zero heating/cooling systems (not having to plug into existing services). Can also ensure housing is sustainably constructed with low/zero carbon emissions through the implementation of high- | <p>Ranges (spatially) between - and 0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development outside the District is less likely to increase carbon emissions within the FoDD, with the exception of potential sites on/near the neighbouring authority's border with the FoDD. However, building outside of the District does not support energy conservation or reduce the vulnerability to effects of climate change within the District. | <p>+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some opportunity for small and large scale strategic carbon offset measures. Can ensure housing is sustainably constructed with low/zero carbon emissions through the implementation of high-quality design and planning policy/design guidance Masterplanning for new settlement element allows for large-scale design for energy conservation and efficiency through high quality design and can introduce measures such as large-scale net zero heating/cooling systems (not having to plug into existing services). Can also ensure housing is sustainably constructed with low/zero carbon emissions through the implementation of high-quality design and planning policy/guidance. The Selected Planned Expansion element provides some scope for planned local small-scale measures to support energy conservation and energy efficient design to |

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| | | | | <p>quality design and planning policy/guidance</p> <p>Masterplanning has the benefit of designing for the future in mind to reduce vulnerability of the settlement to the effects of climate change, including flooding (through large-scale flood mitigation such as SUDS) and Net Zero Carbon measures imbedded into the scheme.</p> | | reduce effects of climate change. |
| <p>11. To reduce waste generation and achieve sustainable management of waste.</p> | <p>-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development will always result in waste generation. Small-scale measures could be implemented through planning policy and design guidance to reduce waste generation and achieve better sustainable management of it, but this is mainly developer-led. | <p>-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development will always result in waste generation. Small scale measures could be implemented through planning policy and design guidance to reduce waste generation and achieve better sustainable management of it, but this is mainly developer-led. | <p>- -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development will always result in waste generation. Small scale measures could be implemented through planning policy and design guidance to reduce waste generation and achieve better sustainable management of it, but this is mainly developer-led and given the total lack of strategic management of development with this option, it means less chance of implementing sustainable measures for reducing waste generation and achieving sustainable management. | <p>-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development will always result in waste generation. However, large-scale measures could be implemented through masterplanning, planning policy and design guidance to reduce waste generation and achieve better sustainable management of it, | <p>+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development outside the District is less likely to increase waste generation within the FoDD, with the exception of potential sites on/near the neighbouring authority's border with the FoDD. | <p>-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development will always result in waste generation. However, both small-scale and large-scale measures could be implemented through masterplanning (new settlement element), planning policy and design guidance to reduce waste generation and achieve better sustainable management of it. |
| <p>12. To safeguard historical and cultural assets.</p> | <p>0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential to avoid development close to heritage, thus maintaining cultural and historical assets. | <p>0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed outcome. Some sites may be closer to heritage assets than others, depending on the settlement, but generally less opportunity to avoid harmful development in some cases, thus maintaining cultural and historical assets. | <p>-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development may be in close proximity to heritage assets, thereby not always maintaining cultural and historical assets. | <p>0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential to avoid development close to heritage assets, thus maintaining cultural and historical assets. | <p>+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development outside the FODD is more likely to maintain cultural and historical heritage assets within the District, with the exception of potential sites on/near the neighbouring authority's border with the FoDD. | <p>0</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential to avoid development close to heritage assets, thus maintaining cultural and historical assets. |

- 3.4 The positive and negative effects of each Option are discussed further below, as well as any mechanisms which could mitigate likely significant adverse effects. This section also clarifies why some of the options have been discounted whilst others are considered to be more sustainable.

Option 1: Selective planned expansion of existing settlement(s).

- 3.5 This option would be based on growth at the most sustainable settlements. These would be the areas with the best access to services and facilities, etc. and there would be a need for commensurate infrastructure improvements to support the increased scale of development. The findings of the strategic SA may be summarised as follows:

- 3.6 The positive effects (in sustainability terms) of this option include:

The ability to select development of appropriate scale in the most sustainable locations. Taking advantage of the facilities nearby such as education, health, retail and recreation as well as the infrastructure which is already in place in the larger towns/villages, without overburdening those settlements, but instead encouraging business and an increased range of employment opportunities, all with a long-term cumulative positive effect on SA Nos. 3,4 & 5. Also reducing dependence on the private car, encouraging use of public transport and active travel, and introducing low/zero carbon off-set measures, all of which have long-term positive effects on SA No. 1 for healthy living along with SA Nos. 3 and 10. Selective expansion can also provide a mix of housing types and sizes to better meet the needs of different sectors and reduce inequalities as well as designing out crime, which are positive effects for SA No. 2. Such an option can also promote biodiversity net gain and be designed to strengthen connectivity for wildlife habitat and create GI, which is a positive effect on SA No. 7.

- 3.7 The negative effects (in sustainability terms) of this option include:

The scale of the existing settlement and the various constraints (such as Statutory Forest, Flooding, protected Ecology, etc.) that apply suggests that there will be restrictions in terms of the capacity available at many of the existing settlements. Additional pressure would be put on infrastructure, and where that is already weak, this could become unsustainable. Traffic generation and congestion would cause additional air quality issues and development would of course leads to waste generation with only limited opportunities for sustainable waste management, which are negative effects on SA Nos. 8 and 11.

Furthermore, an option solely relying on this strategy may therefore only be able to deliver a certain quantum of development. It may also be an option that would not ensure a longer-term sustainable strategy because the existing capacity would be exhausted.

- 3.8 Overall, some of the negative effects of this Option could however be mitigated, such as the provision of improved infrastructure (and funding for it), designing schemes to create active travel routes for healthy living (positive effect on SA No. 1) and improved public transport to reduce traffic generation and to improve carbon offset (positive effects for SA Nos. 3 and 10). However, the best method of mitigation, to avoid putting too much pressure on the infrastructure of existing settlements and to provide a more long-term sustainable strategy would be to combine this Option with another one.

Option 2: General distribution of housing around all existing settlements (planned sharing of the housing numbers across all settlements).

3.9 This option would result in each settlement (regardless of its scale or location) across the district needing to accommodate a share of the required housing numbers, which would also result in a distribution of mixed use and/or employment sites. It is not limited to where there may be sufficient scope or infrastructure to underpin the development, but instead it would result in a mixture of outcomes. The findings of the strategic SA may be summarised as follows:

3.10 Positive effects (in sustainability terms) of this option include:

Mainly, this option results in neutral SA impacts, rather than positive ones. However, it could provide the housing requirement, including affordable housing and a mix of housing types and sizes for the District and new housing would be spread across the district, thus reducing inequalities (having a positive effect on SA No.2). Some (probably a limited number of) sites would be in close proximity to existing services and facilities, including health and education and may provide small scale scope for active travel connections (for healthy living), use of public transport (reduction in dependence on the car) which have positive (albeit very limited) effects for SA Nos. 1,3,4 and 5.

3.11 The negative effects (in sustainability terms) of this option include:

Some of the many smaller and rural settlements in the district would be significantly changed by an increase in development which would be out of scale and character and not supported by any infrastructure, services (health, education, employment, retail), public transport or active travel choices. This option is likely to lead to widespread speculative development in highly unsustainable locations. It would not ensure that housing is in close proximity to services, or facilities to either improve health, academic skills or to support the local economy. There is likely to be lack of employment or social facilities and would be a higher dependency on private transport, all having a long-term cumulative negative effects on SA Nos. 1, 3, 4 and 5. These sites would also result in fewer opportunities to support energy efficiency to reduce effects of climate change (carbon dependency) whilst simultaneously making it difficult to conserve biodiversity or provide biodiversity net gain (BNG) or promote green infrastructure (GI), both causing negative effects on SA Nos. 7 and 10. The only sites which could be more sustainable would be those in the towns and larger settlements where infrastructure and services already exist. As such, this option demonstrates little scope of being sustainable and reliance on this strategy would only deliver a certain quantum of development over this plan period and would not ensure a longer-term sustainable strategy as some of the existing capacity of many of the settlements may be exhausted.

3.12 Potential mitigation to overcome the negative impacts is extremely limited, as this option does not provide the potential to select only the most sustainable locations for development. Therefore, this option is not considered sustainable.

Option 3: Maximum incremental change to the extent of absolute constraints

3.13 This option would simply consider the ultimate capacity of settlements and allow development where possible, it could be similar to the application of the NPPF presumption in favour of

sustainable development where plans are not up to date, i.e. provided all national constraints are respected and there is a reasonable connection to services it is accepted that no 'better' options can be relied on. The findings of the strategic SA may be summarised as follows:

3.14 The positive effects (in sustainability terms) of this option include:

Outcomes are likely to be similar to Option 2, the main positive effect of this option is that it could provide the housing requirement, including affordable housing with potential to provide a mix of housing types and sizes to meet the needs of different sectors of the community and to reduce inequalities, which are all positive effects for SA No.2. A limited number of sites would be in close proximity to existing services and facilities, including health and education and may provide small scale scope for active travel connections (for healthy living) and use of public transport (reduction in dependence on the car) which have positive (albeit very limited) effects for SA Nos. 1,3,4 and 5.

3.15 The negative effects (in sustainability terms) of this option include:

Benefits of existing services, such as health, education, leisure or retail as well as economic benefits (employment) would be very limited and highly dependent on the developer providing them given the nature of what could be piecemeal development. Given that development could take place to the absolute constraints of the settlement, sites are thus more likely to be located in the more sensitive landscape areas with limited or no scope for mitigation measures, not protecting the landscape or areas of landscape value, having negative effects on SA No.6. Furthermore, there would be little opportunity to mitigate ecological and environmental impacts, making it difficult to conserve biodiversity or provide connectivity between wildlife habitat (negatively effecting SA No. 7). Development in this manner would increase traffic generation and congestion, having negative effects on SA No.8 and also put additional unplanned pressure on infrastructure, resulting in higher carbon emissions with no planned approach for carbon offset (negative impacts on SA No.10). The generation of waste is less likely to be managed in a sustainable way and development is more likely to be in close proximity to heritage, thereby not always maintaining cultural and historical assets with little chance of mitigation, having long-term negative effects on SA Nos. 11 and 12.

3.16 Overall, potential mitigation to overcome the negative impacts are severely limited and as such this is not a sustainable option, particularly with the uplift in Local Housing Need as this is likely to lead to largescale and widespread speculative development largely in highly unsustainable locations.

Option 4: Planned New Settlement(s).

3.17 The purpose of this option is to provide one or more new (or substantially new) settlements which would establish a long-term option strategy. The findings of the strategic SA may be summarised as follows:

3.18 The positive effects (in sustainability terms) of this option include:

The identification of one or more new settlements and the promotion of a scale of development that would create a communities supported by appropriate infrastructure. It is assumed that new infrastructure appropriate to the needs of the settlement(s) will be needed

but can be provided in step with its development. At this scale masterplan approach could ensure that sites would be in closer proximity to health and educational services (or new ones created within the new settlement(s)), larger housing numbers can be provided (including affordable housing, wider mixes of housing better able to meet needs of different sectors, and helping to reduce health inequalities with positive effects for SA Nos. 1, 2 and 3. Positive effects would also include greater opportunities for carbon reduction measures (through high quality construction methods and possibly a district heating system) with positive effects for net zero objectives and SA No. 10 that could be cumulative in the longer term. The option can plan to deliver all necessary services, including leisure, retail, etc. as well as offer employment choices. There is a greater opportunity to reduce or mitigate negative impacts to biodiversity and to create large swathes of green infrastructure, strengthening connectivity for habitats and species through a masterplan approach with potential major positive effects in the longer term for SA objective No. 7.

3.19 The negative effects (in sustainability terms) of this option include:

It is recognised that initially the introduction of development on greenfield land (often open countryside) has an immediate damaging impact on the local landscape, however, new settlements have the potential to be designed so that masterplans and design coding ensure that the new settlement is of high quality. Similarly, impacts in terms of traffic generation can be planned more effectively to connect to more public transport networks and to provide a high level of active travel options with longer term positive effects on SA objectives Nos. 3 and 1 through supporting healthy living.

3.20 Nevertheless, new settlements take a long period of time to become embedded and as such, short term housing needs would not be met across the plan period if this strategy were relied on alone. As such, this option can only offer long-term sustainability if combined with another option.

Option 5: ‘Negotiated agreement that some development will be passed to adjoining authority(ies)’.

3.21 This option would be where an agreed major element of the FoDD required development would be met in an adjoining authority area, but only with the approval of the LPAs where the development would occur. In this option any element delivered in an adjoining authority would be subject to SA through that authority(ies) plan/allocations. The findings of the strategic SA may be summarised as follows:

3.22 The positive effects of such an option (in sustainability terms) include:

Overall, development outside the district has good potential to protect the landscape and areas of landscape value within the district, also providing protection of designated ecological areas, having positive effects on SA Nos. 6 and 7. Equally, development outside of the district is less likely to increase traffic generation, congestion and therefore be less harmful to local air quality as well as maintaining water quality and having little impact on waste generation within the district, which are positive effects on SA objectives Nos. 8 and 9. Carbon emissions are likely to be lower or unaffected when development is outside the district, however, it does not support

energy conservation or work towards reducing effects of climate change within the District (SA No. 10).

3.23 The negative effects of such an option (in sustainability terms) include:

The most significant negative effect resulting from this option would be that the local housing need (which should include a mix of housing types and sizes, including affordable) within the FoDD would not be met by housing in a different authority and there would be no more housing available to existing and future residents of the FoDD and would not improve a healthy living. This has long-term negative effects on SA Nos. 1 and 2 and does not reduce social inequalities. Furthermore, development outside the FoDD offers no benefits for increasing or improving community services, such as recreation/leisure, educational, health or provide additional well-paid employment, which are all negative effects on SA Nos. 3, 4 and 5. Essentially, this option is sustainable only in terms of fewer impacts on the environment, but conversely has a much more negative impact on both the economic and social strands of sustainability within the FoDD. Mitigation mechanisms could possibly include cross-border developments, which could offer more social and economic benefits to the District. This option alone would not provide the economic and social benefits of development.

3.24 This option is likely to be discounted as there is currently no evidence from duty to co-operate discussion with adjoining authorities that this is required, given that the surrounding authority areas themselves are constrained or are under greater pressure for development sites and furthermore, there is sufficient space within the district to provide housing. However, this does not preclude any potential cross-border applications where the housing is simply geographically located straddling the district's borders. In these circumstances each affected district benefits from the resultant proportional housing numbers. However, with the initiation of the Local Government Reforms and the Forest of Dean District Council becoming part of a Unitary Authority, this situation is likely to change in the future. However, given that the aim to submit the Local Plan during the Winter 2026, it is likely that the plan will be adopted prior to the Council becoming part of a unitary authority. As a provision in a neighbouring authority cannot be relied upon this option is not considered sustainable.

Option 6: Combination of Option 1 (Selective planned expansion of existing settlement(s)) and Option 4 (Planned New Settlement(s))

3.25 The option of a combination of Selective Planned Expansion of existing settlements and Planned New Settlement(s), provides the benefits of both of the options and gives greater scope to avoid, reduce and mitigate potential environmental, social and economic harm. The findings of the strategic SA may be summarised as follows:

3.26 The positive effects of this combination of options includes:

The ability to select development of appropriate scale in the most sustainable locations, taking advantage of the facilities nearby such as education, health, retail and recreation as well as the infrastructure which is already in place in the larger towns/villages, without exceeding the capacity or cohesion of those settlements, but instead encouraging business and an increased range of employment opportunities, all with synergistic long-term positive effects on SA Nos.

3,4 &5. High quality design will ensure better active travel options (for healthy living) whilst also designing out crime and risks of accidents (positive effects on SA objective No.1).

Whilst at the same time, designing a new settlement(s) can provide a longer-term sustainable strategy to provide the necessary housing/mixed development along with infrastructure and services in a larger-scale manner. Masterplanning could ensure that sites would be in closer proximity to health and educational services (or new ones created within the new settlement(s)), larger housing numbers can be provided (including affordable housing, wider mixes of housing better able to meet needs of different sectors, and helping to reduce health inequalities with positive effects for SA Nos 1, 2 and 3.

There is a larger scope to reduce or mitigate negative impacts to biodiversity and to create large swathes of green infrastructure, strengthening connectivity for habitats and species with potential major positive effects in the longer term for SA objective No 7.

Positive effects would also include wider scale carbon reduction measures (through high quality construction methods and possibly a district heating system) with positive effects for net zero objectives and SA No 10 that could be cumulative in the longer term. The combination of both options also allows the Local Plan to continue to support the role and functions of exiting settlements without overly pressuring them from even further large housing allocations, than if Option 1 were chosen alone.

3.27 The negative effects of this combination of options include:

It is recognised that initially the introduction of development on greenfield land (often open countryside) has an immediate damaging impact on the local landscape, however, new settlements have the potential to be designed so that masterplans and design coding ensure that the new settlement is of high quality. Impacts on traffic generation, congestion and air quality, can be mitigated in part by considering connectivity, improving public transport (less dependency on the private car) and increase active travel potential (more positively effecting SA Nos. 1, and 3), and home-working options when selecting sustainable locations for development. Waste generation and impacts on water quality are negative effects of all types of development in all locations, however mitigation could include the provision of a wider-scale sustainable management plan right from the design stage (thus having a more positive effect on SA Nos 9 and 11).

3.28 Given that the sustainability effects of this combined option are generally positive, and mitigation measures can go a significant way to improve any potential negative effects this is considered to be the **Most Sustainable Option** and is therefore the SA's **favoured** option above the other options tested. Furthermore, from a planning point of view, this option has the best opportunity to provide the local housing need (and associated development) across the whole plan period and beyond.

Planning Advantages and Disadvantages of the Alternative Options

3.29 In addition to the above Sustainability Appraisals of each option, the table below demonstrates what the 'Planning' Advantage and Disadvantages are of the above Options, as this can differ in some ways to what is purely environmentally, economically and socially sustainable:

Table 3: Planning Advantages and Disadvantages of the Alternative Options

| Option | Advantages | Disadvantages |
|--|--|---|
| Option 1: Selective planned expansion of existing settlement(s). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> allows settlements best suited to change to be identified; enables LP policy to support selected locations, and for example, regeneration policies; should support development in most sustainable current location(s) with some scope for sharing infrastructure; will allow range of sites in terms of locations and sizes - provides for continuity; can allow or result in a phased approach over the plan period. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> may not enable long term strategy; could force allocations that have adverse impacts; scope likely to be limited by lack of capacity in/around existing settlements; choice of locations for development may be more driven by availability of land than being the most supportive of the LP strategy overall; may stretch infrastructure by relying on existing provision. |
| Option 2: General distribution of housing around all existing settlements (planned sharing of the housing numbers across all settlements. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> potentially offers a wide range of sites - size and location; some sites are unlikely to be constrained by the need for additional infrastructure; each settlement takes their share (no Nimbyism); benefits of housing and employment are dispersed equally across the district. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not allow overall LP strategic approach; would not address climate change and sustainable transport improvements well; unlikely to support major infrastructure improvements or provision; may have a cumulative negative impact on infrastructure; dispersed development likely to be less energy efficient; may force development in locations where adverse impacts occur, especially on character and landscape; no long term strategy- may not be positively prepared; dispersed smaller sites would not provide same level of affordable housing or S106 contributions; |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> would not serve wider corporate aims well. |
| Option 3: Maximum incremental change to the extent of absolute constraints (do nothing approach). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> potentially offers a wide range of sites - size and location; is flexible; some sites are unlikely to be constrained by the need for additional infrastructure. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not allow overall LP strategic approach; would not address climate change and sustainable transport improvements well; unlikely to support major infrastructure improvements or provision; may have a cumulative negative impact on infrastructure; dispersed development likely to be less energy efficient; dependant on overall requirement may force development in locations where adverse impacts occur, especially on character and landscape; no long term strategy- may not be positively prepared; delivery would be difficult to plan over life of LP; would not serve wider corporate aims well. |
| Option 4: Planned New Settlement(s). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> allows an overall strategy to promote more sustainable development; will have scope for infrastructure delivery (e.g. GI, transport, community facilities, etc.); LP can select the best location and plan infrastructure accordingly; can provide for a long term strategy for this plan and beyond; employment and services can be designed in to the appropriate scale; can complement take up of existing permissions and other sites - providing development opportunities throughout LP period; should enable a wide range of development; | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> new settlement will have a long lead in time and less likely to have good continuity of build-out throughout the entirety of the plan; may be locally unpopular; requires very extensive and detailed supporting evidence; new settlement will require major infrastructure - must be viable; could have wider impact on rural landscape. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may offer scope for cooperation with other authorities, especially cross-border. | |
| Option 5: Negotiated Agreement that some development will be passed to adjoining Authority(ies) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the housing numbers required could be met in whole or in part by a different authority • less of an impact on the environment within the FoDD (landscape, water, air, etc.) • local community may prefer this strategy if they believe there would be less impact on them in terms of landscape harm and traffic generation • potential for less traffic generation • local plan would not have to allocate so many houses • potentially less pressure on the FoDD current infrastructure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • absolutely dependent on agreement with neighbouring authorities – currently no appetite for it • would not provide sufficient local housing within the FoDD, especially affordable housing to meet local needs • would not serve wider corporate aims well • would not provide a sustainable or strategic approach • would not positively encourage the local economy • would not positively impact on providing facilities/services (shops, health, education, etc.) • does not provide for development after the plan period (what next?) • the FoDDC and the local communities of the FoD would have no or little input on where the development would be located or how it is sustainability constructed. |
| Option 6: Combination of Option 1 (Selective planned expansion of existing settlement(s)) and Option 4 and Planned New Settlement(s)) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allows an overall strategy to promote more sustainable development; • will allow range of sites in terms of locations and sizes - provides for continuity; • better prospect of deliverability throughout the plan period; • can provide for a long-term strategy for this plan and beyond; • infrastructure, employment and services can be designed in, whilst also taking advantage of existing infrastructure in larger more sustainable existing settlements; | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new settlement aspect may be locally unpopular; • new settlement in particular requires very extensive and detailed supporting evidence; • new settlement will require major infrastructure - must be viable; • could have wider impact on rural landscape. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • may offer scope for cooperation with other authorities, especially cross border; • allows settlements best suited to change to be identified; • should support development in most sustainable current location(s) with some scope for sharing infrastructure; • can allow or result in a phased approach over the plan period. | |
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The Most Sustainable Strategic Option

- 3.30 From a strategic plan-making point of view, the Most Sustainable Strategic Option is therefore **Option 6: Combination of Option 1 (Selective planned expansion of existing settlement(s)) and Option 4 (Planned New Settlement(s))**. By having a mixture of Selective Planned Expansion of existing settlements and Planned New Settlement(s), this provides the benefits of both of the options and provides greater scope to avoid, reduce and mitigate potential environmental, social and economic harm. Selected development of appropriate scale can take advantage of the services and infrastructure which is already in place in the larger towns/villages, without overburdening those settlements. Whilst a new settlement can provide a longer-term sustainable strategy to provide the necessary housing/mixed development along with infrastructure and services in a larger-scale manner.
- 3.31 A strategy reliant of either the extension to existing settlements, or the development of sustainable new settlements alone, will not achieve the number of new dwellings now required and distributed over the plan period. Options to develop the land surrounding existing settlements and towns, as well as the infrastructure that support them (highways, drainage and services) are becoming exhausted, and will not be capable of delivering or subsequently supporting the total 13,200 new dwellings required up to 2043.
- 3.32 The combination of the two options would address concerns about the capacity available at many of the existing settlements and the quantity of development individual settlements can sustain. It may also ensure a longer-term sustainable strategy for individual settlements because the available sites would not be depleted.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1 A six-week public consultation will begin on the Local Plan Options to Deliver Additional Housing Requirement July 2025. The consultation welcomes suggested changes to the Most Sustainable Option or proposals of alternative options. No decision has been made to where the additional housing requirement allocations should be made.
- 4.2 The next stage in the development of the Local Plan will be to agree, review and refine a strategy and to prepare a draft plan that is based on the preferred option. This may not be the final choice but is expected to represent the one the FoDDC wishes to take forward. The decision to favour one option or another will be made in light of the consultation responses received. This SA document therefore plays an important role as it should help guide the public, consultees and members as to the benefits/disbenefits of each option and clearly outlines which is the most sustainable option.
- 4.3 It is anticipated that much of the first iteration of the Draft Local Plan, such as many of the policies and potentially a large proportion of the existing allocations will be retained, with the addition of new allocations sites as well as new and revised policies to make the Local Plan as sustainable and as sound as possible.
- 4.4. It is expected that the next iteration of the Sustainability Appraisal will be published at the Draft Local Plan stage (expected Winter 2025). It will include assessments of the potential locations for such growth, including assessing the towns and larger villages as well as areas for new settlement(s) as well as appraisals of the planning policies.
- 4.5 The table below provides the expected timeline of the local plan making process (Local Development Scheme):

Table 4: Local Plan & SA timeline

| Local Plan development Process | Date/Expected date | SA stage and web-link |
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| Potential Issues and Options Consultation The Issues and Options consultation represented the first public consultation stage in the update process, this is a non-statutory stage of consultation. | Completed Autumn 2019 | Consultation on Issues and Options: https://www.fdean.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/developing-our-new-local-plan/emerging-local-plan-issues-and-options/ |
| | Feb 2020 | Publication and consultation of SA scoping report (Stage A): www.fdean.gov.uk/media/rxkb4zmg/sustainability-appraisal-scoping-report.pdf . |
| | March 2022 | Publication and consultation on SA Scoping Consultation Report and publication of responses from Statutory Consultees. https://www.fdean.gov.uk/media/y42ipqzx/sa-scoping-consultation-report-final.pdf |
| Preferred Options consultation The Preferred Option and Second Preferred options sought views on the options evaluation of possible alternatives, potential sites and policies. | Completed Winter 2021 Autumn 2022 | Publication and consultation of SA for Potential Large Strategic Sites: https://www.fdean.gov.uk/media/uh4lgltx/sustainability-appraisal-for-potential-large-strategic-sites.pdf |
| Consultation on draft Plan (Regulation 18) This statutory stage includes a six week consultation on a draft Plan, which will set out the Council's preferred strategy for accommodating future growth. Comments made at this stage will help | Completed Summer 2024 | Publication and consultation of Interim SA for Draft Local Plan https://www.fdean.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/developing-our-new-local-plan/draft-local-plan-2041/ |

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| to shape the next stage of the Plan. | | |
| <p>Consultation on Revised Strategy and Preferred Options (Regulation 18)</p> <p>This involves a six week consultation on revised preferred options, in light of the government's revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) December 2024 and standard method housing figure.</p> | Summer 2025 | Publication and consultation of "Further Interim SA for Revised Strategy and Most Sustainable Option" (https://www.fdean.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy/sustainability-appraisal/) |
| <p>Consultation on revised draft plan (Regulation 18)</p> <p>This includes a six week consultation on a revised draft Plan, which will set out the Council's reviews preferred strategy for accommodating future growth. Comments made at this stage will help to shape the next stage of the Plan.</p> | Winter 2025 | Publication and consultation of SA for Draft Local Plan. |
| <p>Publication of Submission Draft Local Plan (Regulation 19)</p> <p>This involves the publication of the Plan in a form which the Council believes to be sound and which it intends to submit for examination. This stage includes a further six week consultation period. Comments must specifically relate to the legal compliance</p> | Summer 2026 | Publication and consultation of SA for Submission Draft Local Plan (Reg.19). |

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| and soundness of the plan. | | |
| Submission (Regulation 22) This is when the plan is submitted by the Council to the Secretary of State. The evidence base and the representations made during the Submission Plan consultation are also provided to the Secretary of State. The Examination of the Local Plan starts at this point. | Autumn 2026 | SA or Publication Version of Local Plan. |
| Examination and Main Modifications The examination involves an independent Planning Inspector testing the plan for legal compliance and soundness. This process includes an examination in public when public hearings are held. | Winter 2026/2027 | Any proposed Main Modifications (MMs) will be subject to SA & the SA Report will accompany the MMs on consultation. |
| Adoption The final stage in the process is in the formal adoption of the Plan by the Council. Once adopted it forms part of the development plan for the area and will guide future development. | Spring 2027 | Publication of SA Adoption Statement. |

