

Sustainability Impact Assessment Tool – Local Plan Spatial Options



Criteria	Score	Justification
Energy Use	0	<p>The emerging Local Plan will be a key document in supporting the transition to net zero. The preferred policy approach seeks to ensure all development will adhere to the energy hierarchy. On-site renewable energy will be required to meet demand, in line with Policy DM5. Central to the preferred policy on high quality and sustainable design is a focus on energy efficiency and reducing energy demand alongside maximising renewable and low carbon energy usage. This will include ensuring new development prioritises the reuse and refurbishment of existing buildings where possible and adopts circular economy principles in construction and material sourcing.</p> <p>The Preferred Spatial Options paper does not introduce anything to revise / add to the preferred policy options specifically in relation to energy use.</p>
GHGs	4	<p>One of the draft plan objectives for the Local Plan is 'to take local action and tackle the climate and ecological emergency 'head-on' for the benefit of current and future generations', including by significantly reducing the district's carbon emissions across all sectors, with a particular focus on carbon intensive activities. The SA of the preferred options paper recognises that all spatial strategy options will deliver a similar amount of growth within the district and therefore have the potential to significantly increase CO2 emissions and other GHG emissions during the construction and occupation of development, including via increased traffic on local road networks. However, other preferred policy options seek to deliver climate change mitigation and adaptation measures. A slight reduction in GHGs would be reliant on exemplary Local Plan climate policies that support net zero development for new and existing development.</p> <p>The Preferred Spatial Options paper addresses feedback received in the previous Preferred Policy Options consultation. A revised settlement hierarchy introduces a fourth settlement tier and together with the spatial strategy defines the scale of development which is likely to be acceptable in each location. This will ensure new development is directed to settlements supported by an appropriate level of services and facilities and therefore reducing the need to travel to meet basic needs. It is also considered that growth to support an increase in services within smaller settlements in accessible locations may be necessary. The approach to identifying preferred spatial options is inherently linked to the spatial strategy, ensuring that sites taken forward for potential allocation will encourage public transport and active travel usage. The Preferred Spatial Options paper also proposes to extend the plan period to 2043. This will allow development to align with long term infrastructure projects such as the delivery of the Carterton Witney Oxford Railway corridor (CWORC). The Preferred Spatial Options consultation paper has identified the infrastructure constraints that will need to be addressed to support delivery of growth but at this stage there is varying levels of certainty.</p>

Air quality	2	<p>The SA of the preferred options paper identified a minor negative effect of most of the spatial strategy options in respect of air quality (with the exception of the Witney-focus option, which would likely have major negative effect on air quality, and the new settlement option, which would have a negligible effect on air quality). The emerging preferred spatial strategy comprises a combination of the spatial options, which should on balance have the effect of decreasing air pollutants by the end of the plan period. Further, the Local Plan includes a preferred policy option that seeks to ensure all development contributes to the protection and improvement of air quality. Sustainable travel and EV infrastructure is critical part of development and reducing traffic and transport related emissions.</p> <p>The Preferred Spatial Options paper addresses feedback received in the previous Preferred Policy Options consultation. A revised settlement hierarchy introduces a fourth settlement tier and together with the spatial strategy defines the scale of development which is likely to be acceptable in each location. This will ensure new development is directed to settlements supported by an appropriate level of services and facilities, including ensuring that growth in principal towns supports regeneration and aligns with infrastructure delivery. Strategic sites that support, for example, major transport schemes to come forward could have a significant impact on decreasing air pollutants. The approach to identifying preferred spatial options is inherently linked to the spatial strategy, ensuring that sites taken forward for potential allocation will encourage public transport and active travel usage. The Preferred Spatial Options paper also proposes to extend the plan period to 2043. This will allow development to align with long term infrastructure projects such as the delivery of the Carterton Witney Oxford Railway corridor (CWORC).</p>
Land use change	2	<p>The Local Plan is a land use plan and, as required by national planning policy, it is prepared with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. The preferred policy approach includes requiring development to adopt an integrated approach to water management (including implementing sustainable drainage systems), maximising the use of previously developed land, and incorporating green infrastructure.</p> <p>The Preferred Spatial Options paper addresses feedback received in the previous Preferred Policy Options consultation. A revised settlement hierarchy introduces a fourth settlement tier and together with the spatial strategy defines the scale of development which is likely to be acceptable in each location. This will ensure new development is directed to settlements supported by an appropriate level of services and facilities, including ensuring that growth in principal towns supports regeneration and makes best use of previously developed land. As part of identifying preferred site options, opportunities for green infrastructure enhancement / provision and alignment with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and other landscape-scale schemes have been a key consideration.</p>

Soil and waterway health	4	<p>One of the draft plan objectives for the emerging Local Plan is 'to protect, support and enhance the quality and resilience of West Oxfordshire's built, historic and natural environments', including by preventing pollution and minimising its impacts on soil resources (interalia).</p> <p>The identification of preferred spatial options has involved assessment of agricultural land and, in line with national planning policy, seeking to guide development away from agricultural land graded Best and Most Versatile (BMV). Improvements to waterway health (e.g. sewage infrastructure) will be required in a number of areas to support delivery of development which should reduce pollutants entering the water environment. Development can also support improvements in flood resilience. The emerging Local Plan policies shall exist alongside other regulatory systems in respect of promoting sustainable land management practices, avoiding sewage discharges and managing flood risk / mitigating the impacts of flooding.</p>
Waste	0	<p>The emerging Local Plan includes a preferred policy approach that seeks to embed sustainable waste management and circular economy principles into new development.</p> <p>The Preferred Spatial Options paper does not introduce anything to revise / add to the preferred policy options specifically in relation to waste.</p>
Sustainable Transport	4	<p>One of the draft plan objectives for the emerging Local Plan is 'to take local action and tackle the climate and ecological emergency 'head-on' for the benefit of current and future generations', including by significantly reducing the district's carbon emissions across all sectors, with a particular focus on carbon intensive activities. The emerging draft spatial strategy includes a prioritisation of sustainable travel and infrastructure alignment. The SA of the preferred options paper identifies that several of the preferred site options are well connected to both existing footpaths and cycle networks and that all strategic sites are likely to provide access to a range of sustainable transport options.</p> <p>The Preferred Spatial Options paper addresses feedback received in the previous Preferred Policy Options consultation. A revised settlement hierarchy introduces a fourth settlement tier and together with the spatial strategy defines the scale of development which is likely to be acceptable in each location. This will ensure new development is directed to settlements supported by an appropriate level of services and facilities, including ensuring that growth in principal towns supports regeneration and aligns with infrastructure delivery. The approach to identifying preferred spatial options is inherently linked to the spatial strategy, ensuring that sites taken forward for potential allocation will encourage public transport and active travel usage. The Preferred Spatial Options paper also proposes to extend the plan period to 2043. This will allow development to align with long term infrastructure projects such as the delivery of the Carterton Witney Oxford Railway corridor (CWORC). At this stage, however, we are unable to conclude the significance of the impact on the use of sustainable transport.</p>

Biodiversity	8	<p>Achieving biodiversity net gain is a national mandatory requirement for all planning permissions and the objective is for development to deliver at least a 10% increase in biodiversity value relative to the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat. The emerging Local Plan includes a preferred policy approach that seeks to go further by ensuring that BNG is not only a numerical target but also provides a meaningful contribution to local nature recovery.</p> <p>The identification of preferred spatial options has therefore placed emphasis where sites have opportunities to align with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.</p>
Climate Change Adaptation	8	<p>One of the draft plan objectives for the emerging Local Plan is 'to take local action and tackle the climate and ecological emergency 'head-on' for the benefit of current and future generations'. Climate change mitigation and adaptation is emphasised throughout the preferred policy and spatial options, seeking to ensure development is resilient to the impacts of flooding and extreme heat; reduces carbon emissions; enables deployment of renewable / low-carbon energy; supports nature recovery; and maximises the efficient use of land and buildings. Where preferred spatial options include areas of high flood risk, the document recognises that development siting will need to be carefully considered in line with the flood risk hierarchy.</p>
Sustainable Materials	0	<p>One of the emerging key principles for new development as set out in draft Policy DM1 includes the long-term durability of buildings; ensuring proposals consider the longevity of materials. This links to the emerging policy DM5 - Achieving Net-Zero Carbon Development which recognises that buildings are responsible for a significant proportion of carbon emissions through operational use and embodied carbon in construction materials. The emerging preferred policy approach includes embedding retrofit as a core planning priority across the district; requiring development proposals to consider the efficient use of materials and adhere to the waste hierarchy and circular economy principles.</p> <p>The Preferred Spatial Options paper does not introduce anything to revise / add to the preferred policy options specifically in relation to sustainable materials.</p>
Food	4	<p>The emerging Local Plan includes a specific policy for supporting the creation of healthy, sustainable food environments, the objectives of which include ensuring new developments provide access to a variety of healthier food options; promoting opportunities for food growing; integrating food-friendly spaces within the design of residential and public areas; and fostering a sense of community and local food production through public realm interventions.</p> <p>The Preferred Spatial Options paper addresses feedback received in the previous Preferred Policy Options consultation. A revised settlement hierarchy introduces a fourth settlement tier and together with the spatial strategy defines the scale of development which is likely to be acceptable in each location. This will ensure new development is directed to settlements supported by an appropriate level of services and facilities including, for example, food shops and safeguards against the loss or degradation of facilities such as allotments. One of the preferred spatial options includes an area of existing allotment use. If this area is taken forward for allocation, consideration will need to be made as to whether this use can be retained on site or potentially re-located.</p>

Health	8	<p>One of the draft plan objectives for the emerging Local Plan includes 'to foster healthier and happier communities across West Oxfordshire'. The emerging preferred policy approach focuses on integrating health and well-being into the planning and development process. Draft Core Policy 9 - Healthy Place Shaping policy seeks to ensure all development proposals adhere to the agreed Oxfordshire-wide principles of healthy place shaping and that major development proposals are accompanied by a Health Impact Assessment (HIA).</p> <p>The Preferred Spatial Options paper addresses feedback received in the previous Preferred Policy Options consultation. A revised settlement hierarchy introduces a fourth settlement tier and together with the spatial strategy defines the scale of development which is likely to be acceptable in each location. This will ensure new development is directed to settlements supported by an appropriate level of services and facilities, including health infrastructure and leisure facilities. The settlement hierarchy and spatial strategy also ensure that growth in principal towns will align with infrastructure delivery. Strategic sites that support, for example, major transport schemes to come forward could have a significant impact on decreasing air pollutants.</p>
Housing	4	<p>One of the draft plan objectives for the emerging Local Plan is to make sure that all of the District's residents are able to meet their housing needs. The plan will do this by maximising the efficient use of the District's existing housing stock; enabling the delivery of a continuous supply of high quality and sustainable new homes to meet identified needs, including affordable housing needs, over the plan period.</p> <p>The Preferred Spatial Options paper addresses feedback received in the previous Preferred Policy Options consultation. One proposed change is to extend the plan period to 2043. This would mean that the overall housing requirement will increase by around 1,800 homes. The previous preferred policy options paper proposed that the Local Plan would add a 10% buffer to the planned level of supply and following review of consultation feedback, it is considered that this remains an appropriate approach.</p> <p>A revised settlement hierarchy introduces a fourth settlement tier and together with the spatial strategy defines the scale of development which is likely to be acceptable in each location. The Preferred Spatial Options paper sets out strategic and non-strategic spatial options that have the potential to contribute towards the overall planned supply. The paper looks firstly at existing allocations in the Local Plan 2031 which are yet to have planning permission and revises / refreshes these as appropriate. It then outlines a number of new, potentially suitable locations for future development that are similarly strategic in scale, followed by outlining a number of new, potentially suitable locations for future development that are non-strategic in scale (i.e. capable of accommodating less than 300 homes). These are locations that have been identified by Officers as having some development potential based on the analysis undertaken to date – primarily the updated HELAA. The paper represents a further stage in an interactive process of preparing a robust plan with deliverable housing allocations.</p>

Education	4	<p>The emerging Local Plan preferred policy approach seeks to ensure that growth and development in West Oxfordshire actively supports education, employment, and skills development to foster inclusive, resilient, and prosperous communities.</p> <p>An emerging DM Policy for Learning, Skills and Training Opportunities ensures all new development is supported by timely and effective investment for new or enhanced infrastructure including, but not limited to, education facilities. It also prioritises the provision of education infrastructure as part of major developments and encourages the submission of Community Employment Plans (CEPs) for larger developments. These plans are expected to promote apprenticeships, vocational training, local employment, and engagement with schools and colleges.</p> <p>The Preferred Spatial Options paper addresses feedback received in the previous Preferred Policy Options consultation. A revised settlement hierarchy introduces a fourth settlement tier and together with the spatial strategy defines the scale of development which is likely to be acceptable in each location. This will ensure new development is directed to settlements supported by an appropriate level of services and facilities including schools. As part of the further refinement of the settlement hierarchy, a new tier for large villages (tier 3) now includes settlements of over 1,000 residents and that score favourably in the Settlement Sustainability Report, the methodology for which has in itself been revised to include SEN provision.</p>
Built Community	8	<p>One of the draft plan objectives for the Local Plan is 'to allow West Oxfordshire's resident communities and businesses to thrive within a network of attractive, vibrant, and well-connected market towns and villages'. Several of the draft policies in the emerging Local Plan will ensure that new development maintains and enhances the sense of place in local communities. Emerging Core Policy CP8 High Quality and Sustainable Design requires all development to incorporate key design principles, such as ensuring public spaces are accessible, inclusive, well-connected, safe and functional for diverse community needs. Emerging Policy DM1 - Key Principles for New Development focuses on ensuring development relates well to the existing built form and/or character of the local area; ensuring a high standard of amenity for existing and new occupants; protecting and where possible, enhancing the local landscape and setting of settlements; the protection of important areas of open space including local green spaces; and the provision of safe vehicular and pedestrian access.</p> <p>Other preferred policy options include, for example, a core policy to ensure all new development is supported by timely and effective new or enhanced infrastructure (including community facilities) and expecting development proposals to protect and enhance the green infrastructure network.</p> <p>The Preferred Spatial Options paper addresses feedback received in the previous Preferred Policy Options consultation. A revised settlement hierarchy introduces a fourth settlement tier and together with the spatial strategy defines the scale of development which is likely to be acceptable in each location. This will ensure new development is directed to settlements supported by an appropriate level of services and facilities and therefore reducing the need to travel to meet basic needs.</p> <p>Further, as part of identifying preferred site options, opportunities for green infrastructure enhancement / provision; proximity to public transport and other accessibility opportunities have been a key consideration.</p>

Cultural Community	0	<p>One of the draft plan objectives for the Local Plan is 'to allow West Oxfordshire's resident communities and businesses to thrive within a network of attractive, vibrant, and well-connected market towns and villages'. Several of the draft policies in the emerging Local Plan will ensure that new development maintains and enhances the social and cultural assets of our communities.</p> <p>Preferred policy options include, for example, a core policy to ensure all new development is supported by timely and effective new or enhanced infrastructure, including community and leisure facilities. The purpose of draft policy DM2 - Protection and Provision of Community Facilities and Services is to protect, enhance, and ensure the sustainable provision of community facilities and services across West Oxfordshire. Recognising the vital role that facilities such as schools, healthcare, public houses, libraries, and local shops play in supporting the wellbeing, cohesion, and resilience of communities, the policy seeks to prevent their unjustified loss or degradation.</p> <p>The Preferred Spatial Options paper does not introduce anything to revise / add to the preferred policy options specifically in relation to cultural community assets.</p>
Accessibility	4	<p>Emerging Core Policy CP8 High Quality and Sustainable Design requires all development to incorporate key design principles, such as ensuring public spaces are accessible, inclusive, well-connected, safe and functional for diverse community needs. Emerging DM Policy 20 - Town Centres sets out how the Council will support investment in town centres that improves the public realm, accessibility and safety for all users. The draft policy would also require all development within town centres to contribute positively to the character, quality and accessibility of the public realm. Emerging DM Policy 38 - Supporting Digital Infrastructure for Home and Co-Working will contribute to reducing digital barriers by ensuring proposals for the enhancement of digital infrastructure will be supported where they (inter alia) improve connectivity for underserved or poorly connected areas, ensuring that rural communities are not left behind.</p> <p>The Preferred Spatial Options paper addresses feedback received in the previous Preferred Policy Options consultation. A revised settlement hierarchy introduces a fourth settlement tier and together with the spatial strategy defines the scale of development which is likely to be acceptable in each location. This will ensure new development is directed to settlements supported by an appropriate level of services and facilities and therefore reducing the need to travel to meet basic needs.</p> <p>In terms of the plan preparation process, measures to remove barriers to engagement in the process are being taken, for example making sure consultation documents are accessible and making documents in alternative formats available on request.</p>

Local Economy and Jobs	8	<p>One of the draft plan objectives for the emerging Local Plan is 'to foster a thriving, diverse, and resilient economy in West Oxfordshire, leveraging its strengths and future growth potential. Emerging Core Policy 5 - Supporting Economic Growth and Local Prosperity aims to ensure a sufficient supply of high-quality employment land and floorspace, fostering business expansion and job creation.</p> <p>The Preferred Spatial Options paper addresses feedback received in the previous Preferred Policy Options consultation. One proposed change is to extend the plan period to 2043. The Preferred Spatial Options paper addresses this, explaining that the identified employment land requirements for the period up to 2041 will be extended on a pro-rata basis to cover the plan period to 31 March 2043.</p> <p>The identification of preferred site options for new residential development has involved assessment of access to employment opportunities and three preferred spatial options are identified for potential employment allocations in the Local Plan.</p>
Safety	0	<p>One of the draft plan objectives for the emerging Local Plan includes 'to foster healthier and happier communities across West Oxfordshire' which will be implemented in part by ensuring new development proposals create well-designed, safe, inclusive and accessible environments (included within key principles of high design and healthy place shaping). Emerging Core Policy 10 - Sustainable Transport includes an emphasis on prioritising highway safety and active travel networks designed to create safer streets as part of all new developments.</p> <p>The Preferred Spatial Options paper does not introduce anything to revise / add to the preferred policy options specifically in relation to cultural community assets.</p>
Democratic Voice	8	<p>Public consultation is a key tenet of local plan-making, and is mandated by the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The Preferred Spatial Options consultation represents the third public consultation under Regulation 18. At each stage, the views of key stakeholders including local residents, community groups, special-interest groups, developers and planning agents have been taken into account when developing the preferred policy and spatial approach.</p>
Equity	4	<p>Positive impact on groups with protected characteristics.</p>