

## 2 Methodology

- 2.1 In addition to complying with legal requirements, the approach being taken to the SA of the Greater Cambridge Local Plan is based on current best practice and the guidance on SA/SEA set out in the national Planning Practice Guidance, which involves carrying out SA as an integral part of the plan-making process. **Figure 2.1** below sets out the main stages of the plan-making process and shows how these correspond to the SA process.

Figure 2.1: Corresponding stages in plan making and SA

<b>Local Plan Step 1: Evidence Gathering and engagement</b>
SA stages and tasks
Stage A: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1: Identifying other relevant policies, plans and programmes, and sustainability objectives</li> <li>• 2: Collecting baseline information</li> <li>• 3: Identifying sustainability issues and problems</li> <li>• 4: Developing the SA framework</li> <li>• 5: Consulting on the scope of the SA</li> </ul>
<b>Local Plan Step 2: Production</b>
SA stages and tasks
Stage B: Developing and refining options and assessing effects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1: Testing the Local Plan objectives against the SA framework</li> <li>• 2: Developing the Local Plan options</li> <li>• 3: Evaluating the effects of the Local Plan</li> <li>• 4: Considering ways of mitigating adverse effects and maximising beneficial effects</li> <li>• 5: Proposing measures to monitor the significant effects of implementing the Local Plan</li> </ul>
Stage C: Preparing the Sustainability Appraisal Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1: Preparing the SA Report</li> </ul>
Stage D: Seek representations on the Local Plan and the Sustainability Appraisal Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1: Public participation on Local Plan and the SA Report</li> <li>• 2(i): Appraising significant changes</li> </ul>
<b>Local Plan Step 3: Examination</b>
SA stages and tasks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2(ii): Appraising significant changes resulting from representations</li> </ul>
<b>Local Plan Step 4 &amp; 5: Adoption and Monitoring</b>
SA stages and tasks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3: Making decisions and providing information</li> </ul>
Stage E: Monitoring the significant effects of implementing the Local Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1: Finalising aims and methods for monitoring</li> <li>• 2: Responding to adverse effects</li> </ul>

- 2.2 The sections below describe the approach that has been taken to the SA of the Greater Cambridge Local Plan to date and provide information on the subsequent stages of the process.

## SA Stage A: Scoping

- 2.3 The SA process began in September 2019 with the production of a Scoping Report for the Greater Cambridge Local Plan.
- 2.4 The Scoping stage of the SA involves understanding the social, economic and environmental baseline for the plan area as well as the sustainability policy context and key sustainability issues. The Scoping Report presented the outputs of the following tasks:
- Policies, plans and programmes of relevance to the Local Plan were identified and the relationships between them and the Local Plan and the SA were considered, enabling any potential synergies to be exploited and any potential inconsistencies and incompatibilities to be identified and addressed.
  - Baseline information was collected on environmental, social and economic issues in Greater Cambridge. This baseline information provides the basis for predicting and monitoring the likely effects of options for policies and site allocations and helps to identify alternative ways of dealing with any adverse effects identified.
  - Key sustainability issues for Greater Cambridge were identified.
  - A Sustainability Appraisal framework was presented, setting out the SA objectives against which options and subsequently policies will be appraised. The SA framework provides a way in which the sustainability impacts of implementing a plan can be described, analysed and compared. It comprises a series of sustainability objectives and associated sub-questions that can be used to 'interrogate' options and draft policies during the plan-making process. During the SA, the performances of the plan options (and later, policies) are assessed against these SA objectives and sub-questions.
- 2.5 The SA Scoping Report also sets out information about the methodology for this and later stages of the SA, including proposed criteria for the appraisal of site options. **Table 2.1** presents the SA framework for the Greater Cambridge Local Plan, which includes 15 SA objectives along with their associated appraisal questions. The table also shows how all of the 'SEA topics' (as listed in Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations) have been covered by the SA objectives, reflecting the fact that an integrated approach is being taken to the SA and SEA of the Local Plan.
- 2.6 Public and stakeholder participation is an important part of the SA and wider plan-making processes. It helps to ensure that the SA Report is robust and has due regard for all appropriate information that will support the plan in making a contribution to sustainable development. The Scoping Report will be consulted upon alongside the Issues and Options document and this SA Report and comments received will be addressed at the next stage of SA.

Table 2.1: SA Framework for the Greater Cambridge Local Plan

SA Objective	Appraisal questions	Relevant SEA Topics
<p><b>SA 1: Housing</b></p> <p>To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent, well-designed, sustainably constructed and affordable home.</p>	<p>SA 1.1: Does the Plan provide for the local housing need of Greater Cambridge?</p> <p>SA 1.2: Does the Plan deliver the range of types, tenures that Greater Cambridge needs over the plan period?</p> <p>SA 1.3: Does the Plan increase the supply of affordable homes in both urban and rural areas?</p> <p>SA 1.4: Does the Plan provide for the housing needs of both an ageing and young population based on locational needs?</p> <p>SA 1.5: Does the Plan provide for specialist housing needs, including that of the student population and Gypsies and Travellers?</p>	<p>Population, Human Health and Material Assets</p>
<p><b>SA 2: Access to services and facilities</b></p> <p>To maintain and improve access to centres of services and facilities including health centres and education.</p>	<p>SA 2.1: Does the Plan support the existing city, district, local, neighbourhood, rural and minor rural centres?</p> <p>SA 2.2: Does the Plan provide for sufficient local services and facilities to support new and growing communities (e.g. schools, employment training and lifetime learning facilities, health facilities, sport and recreation, accessible green space and services in local centres)?</p> <p>SA 2.3: Does the Plan provide for development within proximity to existing or new services and facilities that are accessible for all?</p>	<p>Population, Human Health and Material Assets</p>
<p><b>SA 3: Social Inclusion and Equalities</b></p> <p>To encourage social inclusion, strengthen community cohesion, and advance equality between those who share a</p>	<p>SA 3.1: Does the Plan facilitate the integration of new neighbourhoods with existing neighbourhoods?</p> <p>SA 3.2: Does the Plan promote developments that benefit and are used by existing and new residents in Greater Cambridge, particularly for Greater Cambridge's most deprived areas?</p> <p>SA 3.3: Does the Plan meet the needs of specific groups in Greater</p>	<p>Population, Human Health and Material Assets</p>

SA Objective	Appraisal questions	Relevant SEA Topics
protected characteristic (Equality Act 2010) and those who do not.	<p>Cambridge, including those with protected characteristics and the needs of a growing and ageing population?</p> <p>SA 3.4: Does the Plan promote the vitality and viability of Greater Cambridge's city, district, local, neighbourhood, rural and minor rural centres through social and cultural initiatives?</p> <p>SA 3.5: Does the Plan help to support high levels of pedestrian activity/ outdoor interaction, where people mix?</p> <p>SA 3.6: Does the Plan remove or reduce disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics?</p>	
<p><b>SA 4: Health</b></p> <p>To improve public health, safety and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities.</p>	<p>SA 4.1: Does the Plan promote health and wellbeing and encourage healthy lifestyles by maintaining, connecting, creating and enhancing multifunctional open spaces, green infrastructure, and recreation and sports facilities and by providing access to recreational opportunities in the countryside?</p> <p>SA 4.2 Does the Plan promote healthy lifestyle choices by encouraging and facilitating walking and cycling, including provision of dedicated cycleways, as well as permeable and legible streets?</p> <p>SA 4.3: Does the Plan safeguard human health and well-being by promoting climate change resilience through sustainable siting, design, landscaping and infrastructure, particularly green infrastructure?</p> <p>SA 4.4: Does the Plan provide sufficient access to local health services and facilities (e.g. health centres and hospitals)?</p> <p>SA 4.5: Does the Plan encourage local food growing?</p> <p>SA 4.6: Does the Plan promote mental wellbeing through the design of attractive places and opportunities for social interaction?</p> <p>SA 4.7: Does the Plan promote principles of good urban design to limit the</p>	Population, Human Health and Climatic Factors

SA Objective	Appraisal questions	Relevant SEA Topics
	<p>potential for crime in Greater Cambridge?</p> <p>SA 4.8: Does the Plan contribute to a reduction in the fear of crime?</p>	
<p><b>SA 5: Biodiversity and geodiversity</b></p> <p>To conserve, enhance, restore and connect wildlife, habitats, species and/or sites of biodiversity or geological interest.</p>	<p>SA 5.1: Does the Plan avoid adverse effects on internationally and nationally designated biodiversity and geodiversity assets within and outside Greater Cambridge?</p> <p>SA 5.2: Does the Plan avoid adverse effects on locally designated biodiversity and geodiversity assets within and outside Greater Cambridge, including ancient woodland?</p> <p>SA 5.3: Does the Plan seek to protect and enhance ecological networks, including opportunity areas (buffer and stepping stone opportunities) identified through biodiversity opportunity mapping, promoting the achievement of biodiversity net gain, whilst taking into account the impacts of climate change?</p> <p>SA 5.4: Does the Plan provide and manage opportunities for people to come into contact with wildlife whilst encouraging respect for and raising awareness of the sensitivity of biodiversity?</p>	<p>Biodiversity, Flora, Fauna and Human Health</p>
<p><b>SA 6: Landscape and townscape</b></p> <p>To conserve and enhance the character and distinctiveness of Greater Cambridge's landscapes and townscapes, maintaining and strengthening local distinctiveness and sense of place.</p>	<p>SA 6.1: Does the Plan protect and enhance Greater Cambridge's sensitive, special landscapes, such as fens, and historic settlements?</p> <p>SA 6.2: Does the Plan protect and enhance Greater Cambridge's natural environment assets (including parks and green spaces, common land, woodland and forest reserves) and public realm?</p> <p>SA 6.3: Does the Plan protect the setting of the city of Cambridge, including key views into and out of the city?</p>	<p>Landscape, Biodiversity, Flora, Fauna and Cultural Heritage</p>
<p><b>SA 7: Historic environment</b></p>	<p>SA 7.1: Does the Plan conserve and enhance Greater Cambridge's designated heritage assets, including their setting and their contribution to</p>	<p>Cultural Heritage, Architectural and</p>

SA Objective	Appraisal questions	Relevant SEA Topics
<p>To conserve and/or enhance the qualities, fabric, setting and accessibility of Greater Cambridge's historic environment.</p>	<p>wider local character and distinctiveness?</p> <p>SA 7.2: Does the Plan conserve and enhance Greater Cambridge's non-designated heritage assets, including their setting and their contribution to wider local character and distinctiveness?</p> <p>SA 7.3: Does the Plan safeguard, and where possible enhance, the historic fabric of the city of Cambridge?</p> <p>SA 7.4: Does the Plan provide opportunities for improvements to the conservation, management and enhancement of Greater Cambridge's heritage assets, particularly heritage at risk?</p> <p>SA 7.5: Does the Plan promote access to, as well as enjoyment and understanding of, the local historic environment for Greater Cambridge's residents and visitors?</p>	<p>Archaeological Heritage</p>
<p><b>SA 8: Efficient use of land</b> To make efficient use of Greater Cambridge's land resources through the re-use of previously developed land and conserve its soils.</p>	<p>SA 8.1: Does the Plan maximise the provision of housing and employment development on previously developed land?</p> <p>SA 8.2: Does the Plan ensure contaminated land is remediated where appropriate?</p> <p>SA 8.3: Does the Plan minimise the loss of best and most versatile agricultural land to development?</p>	<p>Soil and Material Assets</p>
<p><b>SA 9: Minerals</b> To conserve mineral resources in Greater Cambridge.</p>	<p>SA 9.1 Does the Plan ensure that unnecessary or unjustified sterilisation of mineral resources is prevented?</p>	<p>Material Assets</p>
<p><b>SA 10: Water</b> To achieve sustainable water resource management and enhance the quality of Greater</p>	<p>SA 10.1: Does the Plan ensure there is sufficient water to serve new growth for the lifetime of the development in a changing climate without negatively impacting on the environment?</p> <p>SA 10.2: Does the Plan seek to improve the water quality of Greater</p>	<p>Water, Biodiversity, Fauna and Flora</p>

SA Objective	Appraisal questions	Relevant SEA Topics
Cambridge's waters.	<p>Cambridge's rivers and water bodies?</p> <p>SA 10.3: Does the Plan minimise inappropriate development in Source Protection Zones?</p> <p>SA 10.4: Does the Plan ensure there is sufficient waste water treatment infrastructure and environmental capacity to accommodate the new development in a changing climate?</p> <p>SA 10.5: Does the Plan promote development which would avoid water pollution due to contaminated runoff from development?</p> <p>SA 10.6: Does the Plan support efficient use of water in new developments, including the recycling of water resources, promoting water stewardship and water sensitive design where appropriate?</p>	
<p><b>SA 11: Adaptation to climate change</b></p> <p>To adapt to climate change, including minimising flood risk.</p>	<p>SA 11.1: Does the Plan minimise inappropriate development in areas prone to flood risk and areas prone to increasing flood risk elsewhere, taking into account the impacts of climate change?</p> <p>SA11.2: Does the Plan promote the use of Natural Flood Management schemes, SuDS and flood resilient design?</p> <p>SA11.3: Does the Plan promote design measures in new development and the public realm to respond to weather events arising from climate change, such as heatwaves and intense rainfall?</p> <p>SA 11.4: Does the Plan provide, enhance and retrofit green infrastructure?</p>	Water, Material Assets, Climatic Factors and Human Health
<p><b>SA 12: Climate change mitigation</b></p> <p>To minimise Greater Cambridge's contribution to climate change</p>	<p>SA 12.1: Does the Plan promote energy efficient design?</p> <p>SA 12.2: Does the Plan encourage the provision of energy from renewable sources?</p> <p>SA 12.3: Does the Plan promote the use of locally and sustainably sourced, and recycling of, materials in construction and renovation?</p>	Air, Human health, air and Climatic factors

SA Objective	Appraisal questions	Relevant SEA Topics
	<p>SA 12.4: Does the Plan support access to public transport provision?</p> <p>SA 12.5: Does the Plan create, maintain and enhance attractive and well-connected networks of public transport and active travel, including walking and cycling?</p> <p>SA 12.6: Does the Plan support development which is in close proximity to city, district and rural centres, services and facilities, key employment areas and/or public transport nodes, thus reducing the need to travel by car?</p> <p>SA12.7: Does the Plan address congestion hotspots in the road network?</p>	
<p><b>SA 13: Air quality</b> To limit air pollution in Greater Cambridge and ensure lasting improvements in air quality.</p>	<p>SA 13.1: Does the Plan avoid, minimise and mitigate the effects of poor air quality?</p> <p>SA 13.2: Does the Plan promote more sustainable transport and reduce the need to travel?</p> <p>SA 13.3: Does the Plan contain measures which will help to reduce congestion?</p> <p>SA 13.4: Does the Plan minimise increases in traffic, particularly non-electric vehicles, in Air Quality Management Areas?</p> <p>SA 13.5: Does the Plan facilitate the take up of low / zero emission vehicles?</p>	Air and Human Health
<p><b>SA 14: Economy</b> To facilitate a sustainable and growing economy.</p>	<p>SA 14.1: Does the Plan provide for an adequate supply of land and the delivery of infrastructure to meet Greater Cambridge's economic and employment needs?</p> <p>SA 14.2: Does the Plan support opportunities for the expansion and diversification of businesses?</p> <p>SA 14.3: Does the Plan provide for start-up businesses and flexible working practices?</p>	Population and Material Assets

SA Objective	Appraisal questions	Relevant SEA Topics
	<p>SA 14.4: Does the Plan support the prosperity and diversification of Greater Cambridge's rural economy?</p> <p>SA 14.5: Does the Plan support stronger links to the wider economy of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc?</p> <p>SA 14.6: Does the Plan support the growth of the knowledge, science, research and high tech sectors?</p>	
<p><b>SA 15: Employment</b></p> <p>To deliver, maintain and enhance access to diverse employment opportunities, to meet both current and future needs in Greater Cambridge.</p>	<p>SA 15.1: Does the Plan provide for employment opportunities that are easily accessible, preferably via sustainable modes of transport?</p> <p>SA 15.2: Does the Plan support equality of opportunity for young people and job seekers?</p>	<p>Population and Material Assets</p>

## SA Stage B: Developing and refining options and assessing effects

- 2.7 Developing options for a plan is an iterative process, usually involving a number of consultations with the public and stakeholders. Consultation responses and the SA can help to identify where there may be other 'reasonable alternatives' to the options being considered for a plan.
- 2.8 Regulation 12 (2) of the SEA Regulations requires that:  
"The (environmental or SA) report must identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects on the environment of—  
(a) implementing the plan or programme; and  
(b) reasonable alternatives, taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme."
- 2.9 Any alternatives considered for the plan need to be 'reasonable'. This implies that alternatives that are not reasonable do not need to be subject to appraisal. Examples of unreasonable alternatives could include policy options that do not meet the objectives of the plan or national policy (e.g. the National Planning Policy Framework) or site options that are unavailable or undeliverable.
- 2.10 The SA findings are not the only factors taken into account when determining a preferred option to take forward in a plan. Indeed, there will often be an equal number of positive or negative effects identified for each option, such that it is not possible to 'rank' them based on sustainability performance in order to select a preferred option. Factors such as public opinion, deliverability and conformity with national policy will also be taken into account by plan-makers when selecting preferred options for their plan.
- 2.11 The big themes set out in the Issues and Options document, and considered in **Chapter 3** of this document, were identified by drawing on views shared in a number of workshops held with community representatives and local organisations in summer 2019, the Councils' priorities set out in the Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire District corporate plans, and by taking into account national and local planning priorities and requirements.
- 2.12 The spatial strategy options assessed in **Chapter 3** were identified by the Councils as reasonable options drawing upon the development strategy options considered for the Councils' current Local Plans, as well as considering spatial options identified in the recent Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Independent Economic Review and other approaches taken nationally. In the Issues and Options document the Councils recognise that it is likely that the best scenario will involve some growth in all of these locations but in different proportions depending upon the prioritisation of the themes in the plan.

## SA Stage C: Preparing the Sustainability Appraisal report

- 2.13 This SA Report describes the process that has been undertaken to date in carrying out the SA of the Greater Cambridge Local Plan. It sets out the findings of the appraisal of options set out in the Issues and Options document. As set out previously, the nature of this SA Report reflects the high-level nature of the Issues and Options document as an early stage in the development of the Local Plan.

Once more detailed options have been worked up, these will be subject to SA and the results of this will be published in future SA Reports.

## SA Stage D: Consultation on the Greater Cambridge Local Plan and this SA Report

- 2.14 This document is subject to consultation alongside the Issues and Options document to which it relates and the SA Scoping Report. Comments received will be taken on board and addressed at the next stage of the SA process.

## SA Stage E: Monitoring implementation of the Local Plan

- 2.15 At this early stage in the plan making process, the Councils are seeking views on what issues should be addressed through the Local Plan. Recommendations for monitoring the likely significant social, environmental and economic effects of implementing the Greater Cambridge Local Plan will be included in later stages of the SA, once the Local Plan has been drafted.

## Appraisal methodology

- 2.16 The findings of the SA are presented as colour coded symbols showing a score for each option against each of the SA objectives along with a concise justification for the score given, where appropriate. The use of colour coding and symbols allows for likely significant effects (both positive and negative) to be easily identified, as shown in **Figure 2.2** below.

Figure 2.2: Key to symbols and colour coding used in the SA of the Greater Cambridge Local Plan

++	Significant positive effect likely
++/-	Mixed significant positive and minor negative effects likely
+	Minor positive effect
+/-	Mixed minor effects likely
-	Minor negative effect likely
-/+	Mixed significant negative and minor positive effects likely
--	Significant negative effect likely
0	Negligible effect likely
?	Likely effect uncertain

- 2.17 Due to the high level nature of options assessed at this stage, all potential effects identified are uncertain. Where this uncertainty is considered to be particularly significant, a question mark is added to the relevant score (e.g. +? or -?) and the score has been colour coded as per the potential positive, negligible or negative effect (e.g. green, blue, orange, etc.).
- 2.18 The likely effects of options and policies need to be determined and their significance assessed, which inevitably requires a series of judgments to be made. The appraisal has attempted to differentiate between the most significant effects and other more minor effects through the use of the symbols shown above. The dividing line in making a decision about the significance of an effect is often quite small. Where either (++) or (--) has been used to distinguish significant effects from more minor effects (+ or -) this is because the effect of an option or policy on the SA objective in question is considered to be of such magnitude that it will have a noticeable and measurable effect taking into account other factors that may influence the achievement of that objective. However, scores are relative to the scale of proposals under consideration.

### Difficulties Encountered

- 2.19 It is a requirement of the SEA Regulations that consideration is given to any data limitations or other difficulties that are encountered during the SA process. The majority of the Issues and Options document sets out open-ended questions regarding what the Local Plan should include and allows respondents to rate how important they consider various issues to be, in relation to a number of themes. It is not possible to carry out full SA assessments of such questions, due to the lack of detail and defined options; therefore this document provides an overview of the sustainability considerations for the themes discussed.
- 2.20 The Issues and Options document sets out options for the spatial distribution of development (in the 'Towards a Spatial Plan' section), which allow for some more detailed appraisal. However, these are fairly broad options regarding the spatial distribution of development and do not relate to specific sites or quanta of development. As such, this document has sought to flag up where these options have potential to result in significant effects, but the actual effects will depend on the exact location, layout and design of developments. Once the Councils have identified more detailed site and policy options it will be possible to draw more certain conclusions about their likely sustainability effects.
- 2.21 Because many effects of development are dependent on the exact location, layout and design of development, it may be possible to mitigate some of the effects highlighted in this SA. However, given the inherent uncertainties about these details at this strategic stage of planning and assessment, the SA focuses on identifying potential significant effects of the options considered, whilst making no assumptions about detailed design or mitigation matters.
- 2.22 The SA of the options has been undertaken using available evidence. There may be gaps in this evidence base that, where possible, will be filled as information and data to inform the Local Plan preparation process continues. For example:
- The need for further investment in infrastructure (e.g. transport, water), services and facilities are likely to be identified once options for development are firmed

up, which may address some of the issues identified in the SA at this early stage of the process.

- There could be undiscovered archaeological features at any location within Greater Cambridge. For the purposes of this SA, we have focused on assessing the likely effects of development on known heritage assets, but further archaeological work may be necessary prior to any development in order to avoid loss of archaeological resources.
- The rate at which emissions from private vehicles will change over the course of the plan period as a result of technological improvements cannot be predicted or realistically factored into judgements about air quality.