



North Essex Authorities Strategic Section One for Local Plans: Draft Publication (Regulation 19)

Draft Sustainability Appraisal (SA): Non-Technical Summary - June 2017







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Glossary of Acronyms

AA	Appropriate Assessment
ALC	Agricultural Land Classification
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
AQMA	Air Quality Management Area
BDC	Braintree District Council
CA	Conservation Area
CAUSE	Campaign Against Urban Sprawl in Essex
CBC	Colchester Borough Council
CCC	Chelmsford City Council
CO2	Carbon Dioxide
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DECC	Department of Energy and Climate Change
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DfT	Department for Transport
DPD	Development Plan Document
EA	Environment Agency
EC	European Commission
ECC	Essex County Council
EEFM	East of England Forecasting Model
EHF	Essex Historic Environment Record
EU	European Union
GC	Garden Community
GCP	Garden City Principle
GTAA	Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment
Ha	Hectare
HE	Historic England
HMA	Housing Market Area
HRA	Habitats Regulations Assessment
I&O	Issues and Options
IWMP	Integrated Water Management Plan
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
KS4	Key Stage 4
LB	Listed Building
LCA	Landscape Character Assessment
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnership
LPA	Local Planning Authority



LNP	Local Nature Partnership
MSA	Minerals Safeguarding Area
NE	Natural England
NEGC	North Essex Garden Communities
NHS	National Health Service
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OAN	Objectively Assessed Need
ONS	Office of National Statistics
PDL	Previously Developed Land
PO	Preferred Options
PPG	Planning Practice Guidance
PRoW	Public Right of Way
SA	Sustainability Appraisal
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SELEP	South East Local Enterprise Partnership
SFRA	Strategic Flood Risk Assessment
SHLAA	Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment
SHELA	Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability
SLAA	Strategic Land Availability Assessment
SHMA	Strategic Housing Market Assessment
SM	Scheduled Monument
SNPP	Sub National Population Projections
SO	Sustainability Objective
SPA	Special Protection Area
SPD	Supplementary Planning Document
SPG	Supplementary Planning Guidance
Sqm	Square Metre
SSSI	Site of Specific Scientific Interest
STW/WRC	Sewage Treatment Works / Water Recycling Centres
SuDS	Sustainable Drainage System
TCPA	Town and Country Planning Association
TDC	Tendring District Council
UDC	Uttlesford District Council
UK	United Kingdom
UPC	Unattributed Population Change
WCS	Water Cycle Study
WPA	Waste Planning Authority



1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Braintree District Council, Colchester Borough Council and Tendring District Council, together forming the 'North Essex Authorities,' in conjunction with Essex County Council as a key partner in its strategic role for infrastructure and service provision, commissioned Place Services of Essex County Council to undertake an independent Sustainability Appraisal (SA) for a Strategic Section One for the respective Council's Local Plans.

Place Services are acting as consultants for this work; therefore the content of this SA should not be interpreted or otherwise represented as the formal view of Essex County Council.

1.2 Section One for Local Plans

In Essex, as elsewhere, the influences of population and economic growth do not stop at administrative boundaries. Settlement patterns, migration flows, commuting and strategic infrastructure needs all have significant influences within and between local authority areas.

Local Plans are the main vehicle for conveying an area's growth requirements and how these will be accommodated. However, individual local authority boundaries cannot encapsulate the geographies of issues that transcend those boundaries. Through active and on-going collaboration the authorities can jointly plan, manage and review strategic objectives and requirements for the effective implementation of sustainable development (including minerals and waste) and enhanced environments.

The geographic and functional relationship between the authorities' areas is demonstrated by the fact that, with Chelmsford City Council, they form a single Housing Market Area (HMA) for planning purposes; and they are a major part of the Haven Gateway, an established economic partnership. Within this context, the forecast levels of future population growth together with the geography of North Essex means that considerations for future growth will include options that have clear cross-boundary implications. These include both the expansion of existing towns and villages as well as possible new settlements.

Consequently, Braintree, Colchester and Tendring have agreed to come together because of their shared desire to promote a sustainable growth strategy for the longer term; and the particular need to articulate the strategic priorities within the wider area and how these will be addressed. Central to this is the effective delivery of planned strategic growth, particularly housing and employment development, with the necessary supporting infrastructure.

The Strategic Section One for Local Plans is intended to form part of each of the authorities' separate Local Plans of Braintree, Colchester and Tendring, with the main purpose of covering the strategic Local Plan requirements of:

- Articulating a spatial portrait of the area, including its main settlements and strategic infrastructure, as a framework for accommodating future planned growth;
- Providing a strategic vision for how planned growth in north Essex will be realised, setting strategic objectives and policies for key growth topics;



- Setting out the numbers of additional homes and jobs across the area that will be needed covering the plan period to 2033; and
- Highlighting the key strategic growth locations across the area and the necessary new or upgraded infrastructure to support this growth.

Sections One and Two of the Local Plans of Braintree, Colchester and Tendring form part of a suite of planning documents relevant to each area, including county-wide and local Plans such as:

- ECC Minerals Local Plan (2014);
- ECC Waste Local Plan (emerging);
- ECC Development Management Policies (2011); and
- Neighbourhood Plans.

Other relevant plans and programmes are identified in Annex of the SA. Annex A also includes the description of other environmental protection objectives which are relevant to Section One including Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds(a) and the Habitats Directive.



2. Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment

2.1 The Requirement for Sustainability Appraisal

The requirement for Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) emanates from a high level national and international commitment to sustainable development. The most commonly used definition of sustainable development is that drawn up by the World Trade Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 which states that sustainable development is:

'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.'

SEA originates from the European Directive 2001/42/EC "on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment" (the 'SEA Directive') which came into force in 2001. It seeks to increase the level of protection for the environment; integrate environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes; and promote sustainable development.

The Directive was transposed into English legislation in 2004 by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (the 'SEA Regulation') which requires an SEA to be carried out for plans or programmes,

'subject to preparation and/or adoption by an authority at national, regional or local level or which are prepared by an authority for adoption, through a legislative procedure by Parliament or Government, and required by legislative, regulatory or administrative provisions'.

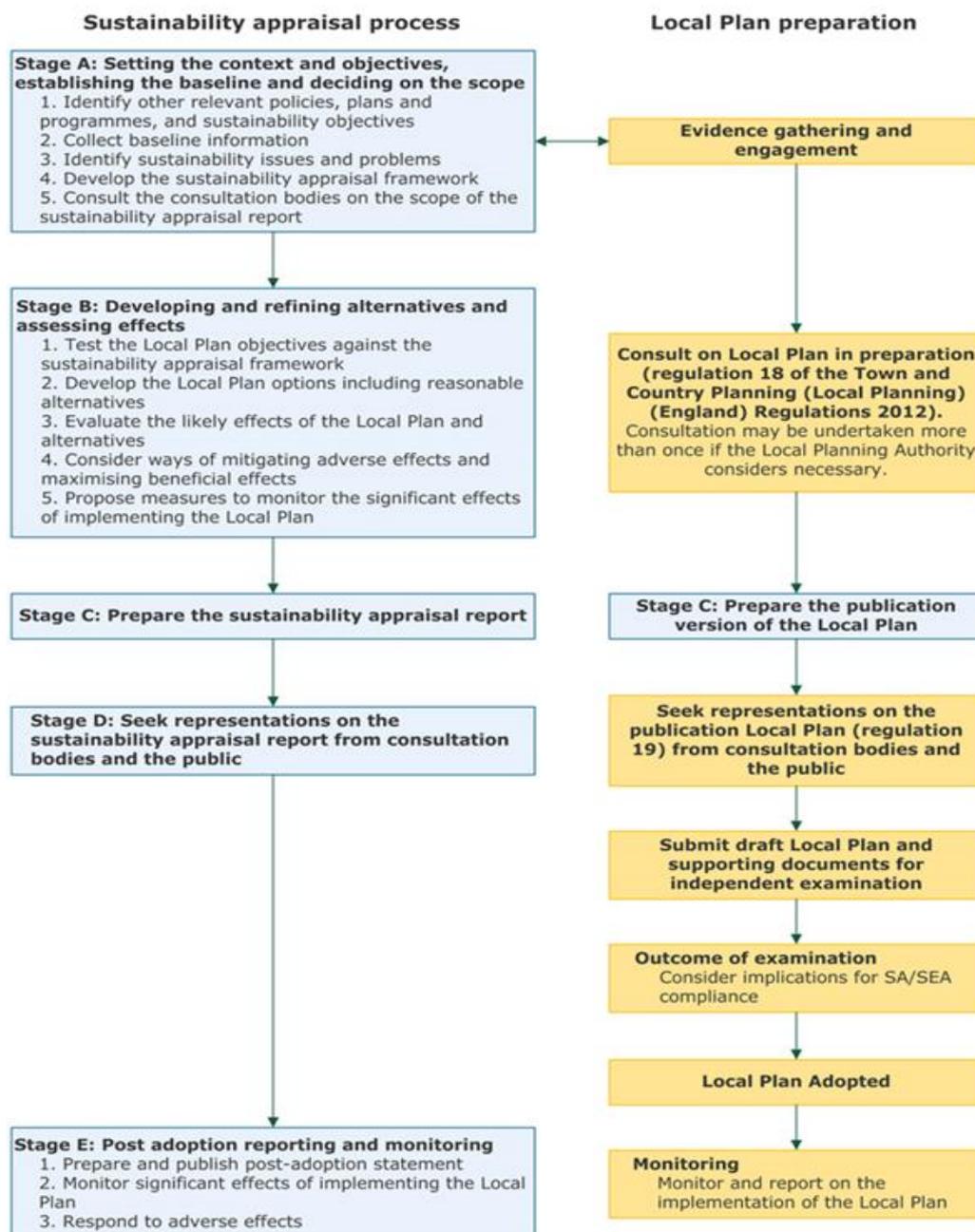
This includes Local Plans. The aim of the SEA is to identify potentially significant environmental effects created as a result of the implementation of the plan or programme on issues such as *'biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors'* as specified in Annex 1(f) of the Directive. SA examines the effects of proposed plans and programmes in a wider context, taking into account economic, social and environmental considerations in order to promote sustainable development. It is mandatory for Local Plans to undergo a Sustainability Appraisal in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 as amended by the Planning Act 2008, and in accordance with paragraph 165 of the NPPF.

Whilst the requirements to produce a SA and SEA are distinct, Government guidance considers that it is possible to satisfy the two requirements through a single approach providing that the requirements of the SEA Directive are met. This integrated appraisal process will hereafter be referred to as SA.

2.2 The Sustainability Appraisal Process

The SA of the Common Strategic Section One for Local Plans follows that of the Sustainability Appraisal process as iterated in National Planning Practice Guidance on Sustainability Appraisal requirements for local plans. The following 5 sequential stages are documented below.

Figure 1: Stages in the Sustainability Appraisal Process and Local Plan Preparation





2.3 The Aim and Structure of this Non-Technical Summary

This Non-Technical Summary responds to Stage C in the SA process above; including those requirements of Stage B: assessing strategic options including reasonable alternatives, evaluating the likely effects of the strategic options and alternatives, and considering ways of mitigating adverse effects and maximising beneficial effects.

The production of a Sustainability Appraisal (Environmental) Report is a statutory requirement at this stage, and this SA Report has been produced to accompany the Draft Publication Local Plan consultations for Braintree District Council's Local Plan, Colchester Borough Council's Local Plan and Tendring District Council's Local Plan.

Following the finalisation of this Report, Stage D in the above SA process requires consultation. There are three statutory consultees or 'environmental authorities' that are required to be consulted for all Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment documents. These are:

- The Environment Agency;
- Natural England; and
- Historic England.

In addition to these, consultation will seek to engage the wider community in order to encompass comprehensive public engagement. The North Essex Authorities may additionally wish to invite comments from focussed groups, relevant stakeholders and interested parties. The detailed arrangements for consultation are to be determined by the North Essex Authorities.

The environmental authorities and public are to be given 'an early and effective opportunity' within appropriate time-frames to express their opinion. This includes the specific notification of the consultation documents and timeframes to those persons or bodies on the 'consultation databases' of the three LPAs. This reflects those persons or bodies who have commented on the SA in previous consultation stages.

3. Sustainability Context and Objectives

3.1 Environmental Characteristics and Objectives

The following table outlines the stages which led to the formulation of the Sustainability Objectives for the Strategic Section One for Local Plans, which were based on key sustainability issues and considerations for the whole Strategic Area. The state of the environment in absence of the Section One is derived from the Baseline Information addressed in Annex B accompanying this report and the wider benefits that can be expected of growth over a large strategic area.

Table 1: Key Sustainability Issues and Problems and resulting Sustainability Objectives

Local Plans and Programmes	Description / Supporting Evidence	State of environment in absence of the Strategic Section One for Local Plans	Sustainability Objective (SO)
Social integration	Some of the highest increases in populations county-wide are forecast to be in Colchester Borough and Tendring District and there is a need to integrate new communities with existing ones.	The absence of a strategic approach across the HMA is likely to lead to the allocation of development across the area that can be considered comparatively more piecemeal and not of the scale to stimulate wider infrastructure benefits, and ancillary development requirements, that can be of wider benefit to new and existing communities.	1) Create safe environments which improve quality of life, community cohesion
Quality of life	Tendring has the highest level of deprivation for a local authority within Greater Essex.		
Population growth	The latest population trend data shows that the population in the HMA area is growing annually. The area's population has been projected to increase (ONS, 2014) to 2021. Some of the highest increases in populations county-wide are forecast to be in Colchester Borough and Tendring District.	Without a strategic approach within the HMA, it is probable that each authority would have to explore the allocation of marginal and less sustainable land.	2) To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent, safe home which meets their needs at a price they can afford



Local Plans and Programmes	Description / Supporting Evidence	State of environment in absence of the Strategic Section One for Local Plans	Sustainability Objective (SO)
The need for specific housing types	There is an identified need for specific types of housing throughout the strategic area including housing for older people.	As indicated by need, market forces alone can not be expected to deliver all types of housing need in the HMA. The exploration of Spatial Strategy and Section Policies that are wider in scope across the HMA / strategic area, including Garden Community options, enables sustainable growth to be well dispersed in reflection of needs across the HMA. Also and importantly the Section One ensures the delivery of such housing through adhering to Garden City Principles.	
Affordable housing	In 2014/15, 3.8% of the net dwelling completions, which accounts for 10 dwellings, were affordable within Tendring, as opposed to higher percentages in Braintree and Colchester. This indicates that affordable housing is an issue.	The scope of the Section One across the HMA can ensure that affordable housing delivery and units for older people can significantly increase. It is also a Garden City Principle and requirement of such strategic development. In the absence of the Strategic Section One for Local Plans, including Garden Communities, there is a possibility that a higher proportion of smaller sites are allocated for development in Local Plans, which would not provide such significant increases in affordable housing and housing for older people.	
Ageing population	The population structure in Colchester is more weighted towards 20-44 year olds, similar to the trends in Braintree but with less dominance in this age group. Contrastingly, Tendring has a higher population of people aged over 65. This age group is also predicted to increase over Local Plan periods.		
Gypsy and Traveller	Tendring has seen no increase in Gypsy and	Garden Communities, as explored in the Strategic Section One for Local	

Local Plans and Programmes	Description / Supporting Evidence	State of environment in absence of the Strategic Section One for Local Plans	Sustainability Objective (SO)
requirements	<p>Traveller provisions since January 2014. Caravan counts in Braintree have increased since January 2014, but with fluctuations in measuring periods between 2014 and 2016 due to unauthorised sites being removed from the statistics, presumably due to eviction or inclusion in the statistics for tolerated sites. A similar trend is apparent in Colchester.</p>	<p>Plans have the capability, and are likely to provide adequate Gypsy and Traveller provision, located in sustainable areas, that is unlikely to otherwise be forthcoming from call-for-sites processes.</p>	
Healthcare services	<p>Health services in the Strategic Area are either underprovided or otherwise oversubscribed. Life expectancy of residents within Tendring District is lower than the regional and national averages with men living for an average of 78.7 years and women on average living 82.0 years. Braintree and Colchester have higher life expectancies for men and women than the national figures, but are both below the regional figures.</p>	<p>In exploring options for strategic level growth within Section One, relevant strategic policies and Garden Communities have the opportunity to integrate adequate health service and recreation provision into the settlement, or can otherwise ensure that accessibility to healthcare facilities is improved. In the absence of this approach, it is possible that current trends will continue and negative implications be exacerbated.</p>	<p>3) To improve the health of the District's residents and mitigate/reduce potential health inequalities</p>
Participation in sport and obesity	<p>Participation in sport has seen a reduction in Tendring and Colchester, and Braintree also has reduced overall since 2012-13. In addition, obesity in Tendring is more prevalent than Braintree, Colchester, the</p>		

Local Plans and Programmes	Description / Supporting Evidence	State of environment in absence of the Strategic Section One for Local Plans	Sustainability Objective (SO)
	region and the nation.		
Business start ups	Compared to sub-national and national figures, Tendring district has experienced a lower start up rate and a lower de-registration rate of businesses indicating a slightly less robust local economy. Braintree and Colchester are more in line with the county and national business registration and de-registration rates.	The link between homes and jobs is a key tenet of sustainability, as is ensuring progressive growth in employment opportunities across a range of sectors. This is best addressed at a strategic level through Section One policies and the opportunities presented by Garden Communities. This ensures that a mix can be adequately provided. In contrast, without such an approach it can be expected that out commuting will continue and the location of new housing and employment opportunities would remain disparate. Garden Communities should also, where sensitively located, ensure that town centres remain viable and offer employment opportunities in easy commuting distance to homes.	4) To ensure and improve the vitality & viability of centres 5) To achieve a prosperous and sustainable economy that creates new jobs, improves the vitality and viability of centres and captures the economic benefits of international gateways
Rural employment	Tendring District is predominantly rural in nature; however the majority of businesses are located in an urban location. The majority of businesses in Colchester are in urban areas.		
Town centres	Town centres within the North Essex and nationally area are under threat from an increase in non-town centre uses through permitted development rights and out of centre retail opportunities which are less congested.		
Commuting patterns	All the authorities registered significant proportions of residents travelling outside to other local authority areas to find employment. Just		



Local Plans and Programmes	Description / Supporting Evidence	State of environment in absence of the Strategic Section One for Local Plans	Sustainability Objective (SO)
	<p>59.9% of residents in Braintree remained in the District for their work, which was the lowest percentage of the Districts and Boroughs. Tendring was the next highest, followed by Colchester with the lowest proportion of residents travelling elsewhere for employment.</p>		
<p>International and European wildlife designations</p>	<p>In the Plan Area there are a number of Ramsar sites which include Hamford Water, and parts of the Colne and Blackwater estuaries which include coastal areas, estuaries, rivers and lakes/reservoirs. These Ramsar sites are also SPAs. There is also one 1 SAC in the area: a large coastal area known as Essex Estuaries</p>	<p>The exploration of strategic growth in a plan led system at an early stage enables the results and recommendations of HRA and AA to be factored into plan making at the strategic level. This ensures that mitigation strategies can be developed as per the recommendations of these studies to alleviate pressure on designations and eradicate any 'likely significant effects.'</p>	<p>6) To value, conserve and enhance the natural environment, natural resources, biodiversity and geological diversity</p>
<p>National and local wildlife designations</p>	<p>There are a number of National Nature Reserves, SSSIs, Local Wildlife Sites and Local nature Reserves in the strategic area.</p>	<p>The exploration of strategic growth in a plan led system at an early stage, enables the green infrastructure of the strategic area to be interconnected and enhanced through a joined-up approach to new settlements and associated economies of scale that could otherwise not be expected. The scope of Section One ensures that green infrastructure is better integrated across the strategic area.</p>	
<p>Car ownership</p>	<p>Tendring and Colchester are above the regional and national averages for</p>	<p>Car ownership can be expected to increase without the development of solutions that deliver truly sustainable</p>	<p>7) To achieve more sustainable travel behaviour, reduce the</p>

Local Plans and Programmes	Description / Supporting Evidence	State of environment in absence of the Strategic Section One for Local Plans	Sustainability Objective (SO)
	households owning 1 or more cars, in contrast with Braintree which is lower.	options at a strategic level that ensure a range of employment opportunities and services are accessible by sustainable means.	need to travel and reduce congestion
Congestion	Congestion is common on specific sections of the strategic road network.		
Air quality	There are a number of AQMAs in Colchester		
Congestion and interconnectivity	There are network efficiency issues on a number of strategic inter-urban routes which are operating at or near to capacity.	Without a strategic plan-led approach to growth, it is possible that development requirements on a district / borough wide basis can conflict in the wider area in regard to congestion. The Section One enables a joined up approach to growth that contributes to wider interconnectivity and better transport solutions / improvements.	8) To promote accessibility, ensure that development is located sustainably and makes efficient use of land, and ensure the necessary infrastructure to support new development
Transport infrastructure	There is a strategic need for transport infrastructure improvements associated with the A12 and A120		
Rural transport	The strategic area is largely rural in nature and rural public transport services and interconnectivity is poor.		
Educational achievement	Tending on average has lower proportions of students achieving KS4 results across all measures when compared with Braintree and Colchester. This trend extends to adult qualifications, where Braintree and Colchester are above regional and national averages for adults with NVQ1 level	Solutions to address these two issues can be considered to be feasible and better aligned across the strategic area through a strategic approach. Garden Communities and strategic policies can ensure the incorporation of schools and stimulate the provision of facilities by meeting required dwelling yield thresholds.	



Local Plans and Programmes	Description / Supporting Evidence	State of environment in absence of the Strategic Section One for Local Plans	Sustainability Objective (SO)
	qualifications or higher.		
School capacity	School capacities are forecast to be in deficit, when adjusted for new housing requirements		
Heritage assets at risk	According to the Heritage at Risk Register (2016), there are 15 assets listed as being at risk in Tendring. This consists of 7 Scheduled Monuments, 4 Listed Buildings and 4 Conservation Areas. There are 7 assets listed as being at risk in Braintree. This consists of 3 Scheduled Monuments, 2 listed places of worship and 2 Conservation Areas. There are 10 assets listed as being at risk in Colchester. This consists of 4 Scheduled Monuments, 2 listed places of worship, 1 Listed Building and 3 Conservation Areas.	A plan-led approach over the wider strategic area ensures that housing and employment needs can be met in more suitable areas regarding the protection of the historic environment; in the absence of this approach district / borough wide needs would be met more independently and development pressures could lead to the allocation of less suitable land or urban concentration / expansion at higher densities. This could impact on Conservation Areas and historic cores. The exploration of a plan-led system at the strategic level ensures a consistency of approach in regard to the historic environment and historic landscapes. Garden Communities at the scales identified also ensures that mitigation strategies can be successfully and holistically integrated over a wide area with additional potential for the enhancement of any heritage assets or their settings.	9) To conserve and enhance historic and cultural heritage and assets and townscape character
Listed buildings	There is a concentration of listed buildings in the district of Braintree and also around historic towns such as Colchester.		
Historic towns	Colchester is the country's oldest town and the historic environment should be effectively protected and valued for its own sake, as an irreplaceable record		



Local Plans and Programmes	Description / Supporting Evidence	State of environment in absence of the Strategic Section One for Local Plans	Sustainability Objective (SO)
	<p>which contributes to our understanding of both the present and the past.</p>		
<p>Renewable energy use</p>	<p>Tendring District, Colchester Borough and Braintree District all consume more energy from non-renewable sources as a percentage of their consumption compared to the East of England as a whole</p>	<p>Solutions to address this issue can be considered to be feasible at the strategic level that can incorporate and stimulate the provision for renewable energy and energy efficiency aspirations through economies of scale.</p>	<p>10) To make efficient use of energy and reduce contributions to climatic change through mitigation and adaptation.</p>
<p>Water scarcity and management</p>	<p>Water management is challenging given the combination of high development growth and it being one of the driest counties in England. In respect of water quantity a significant portion of the resource is considered to be ‘water stressed’; the resource availability status of rivers and aquifers show that they are generally over abstracted; and not self-sufficient in relation to local sources of water supply and needs to import substantial quantities of water to satisfy existing demand</p>	<p>In the absence of the strategic Section One for Local Plans, development could come forward that does not explore holistic approaches to meeting water demand within the strategic area.</p>	<p>11) To improve water quality and address water scarcity and sewerage capacity</p>
<p>Fluvial flood risk</p>	<p>Although flooding cannot be completely prevented, its impacts can be avoided and reduced through effective planning and land management. The National Planning Policy Framework seeks to avoid inappropriate</p>	<p>A plan-led approach over the wider strategic area ensures that housing and employment needs can be met in areas that are less susceptible to flooding; in the absence of this approach district / borough wide needs would be met more independently and development pressures could lead to</p>	<p>12) To reduce the risk of fluvial, coastal and surface water flooding</p>



Local Plans and Programmes	Description / Supporting Evidence	State of environment in absence of the Strategic Section One for Local Plans	Sustainability Objective (SO)
	development in areas at risk of flooding, but where development is necessary, to ensure that it is safe and does not increase flood risk elsewhere.	the allocation of less suitable land or urban concentration / expansion at higher densities which would exacerbate surface water flood risk.	
Surface water flood risk	Surface water flood risk is relatively high with all main settlements assessed being ranked in the top 1,000 settlements most susceptible to surface water flooding.	The exploration of Garden Communities at the scales identified also ensures that sustainable drainage methods can be successfully and holistically integrated over a wide area with additional potential for biodiversity gain.	
Coastal flood risk	Significant levels of flood risk have been identified along the Essex coast and inland along river stretches.		
Air quality	There have been general reductions on the average energy consumption on roads in the area. Similar reductions are apparent on the majority of roads throughout all authorities with the exception of minor roads in Colchester.	There is a need to allocate strategic development in such a way that air quality issues in Colchester are not exacerbated. Without a strategic approach across the HMA, it is possible that the Borough Council would be prompted to allocate less suitable land, or a number of urban extensions to the main town of Colchester, to meet their borough-wide needs as stated in the OAN Report.	13) To improve air quality
AQMA's	There are a large number of AQMA's in the town of Colchester.	A plan-led approach over the wider strategic area ensures that housing and employment needs can be met in more suitable areas as opposed to any concentration / expansion of towns at higher densities which could exacerbate air quality issues.	



Local Plans and Programmes	Description / Supporting Evidence	State of environment in absence of the Strategic Section One for Local Plans	Sustainability Objective (SO)
AONB pressures	There is one AONB, Dedham Vale, which lies on the border of Suffolk and Essex in Colchester Borough covering an area of 90 sq. km. It has been designated such because it is an exceptional example of a lowland river valley and plans are being explored to extend this designation westward.	It is unlikely that there would be any significant difference in conditions without the implementation of the Section One.	14) To conserve and enhance the quality of landscapes
Agricultural land and soil quality	There are significant areas of Grade 1 agricultural land within Tendring, and smaller areas within Colchester Borough.	It is unlikely that there would be any significant difference in conditions without the implementation of the Section One.	15) To safeguard and enhance the quality of soil and mineral deposits
Preserving mineral deposits	The area has extensive deposits of sand and gravel. The sand and gravel resources in Essex are significant in national, sub-national and local terms - Essex is one of the largest producers in the UK; most geographically extensive and significantly mixed within the centre and north of Essex – namely the districts of Uttlesford, Braintree, Chelmsford, Colchester and Tendring.	It is unlikely that there would be any significant difference in conditions without the implementation of the Section One.	

4. The Approach to Assessing Section One

4.1 Introduction

The SA is required to assess the environmental, social and economic impacts of the strategic content of the three authorities' Local Plan.

The assessment was undertaken by exploring the sustainability implications of the Section One in so far as it will meet the objectives highlighted in the previous table. In addition to assessing Section One this way, the allocation of strategic sites for development ('Garden Communities') contained within Section One have been explored using criteria considered more relevant to sites of this scale. These criteria are contained in the following table.

Table 2: Framework for Assessing Garden Community Options

Objective	Criteria
1. Physical Limitations – Absence of insurmountable problems (e.g. access, ground conditions, flood risk, hazardous risks, pollution, contamination and air quality)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Absence of insurmountable problems (ground conditions, flood risk, hazardous risks, pollution, contamination and air quality) - Incorporation of SuDS.
2. Impacts – Acceptable impacts on high quality agricultural land, important landscape features, townscape features, sites of nature conservation interest and heritage assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reflect a fusion of the best of the past while embracing new materials and the needs of modern living - Acceptable impacts only on sites of nature conservation interest. - A surrounding belt of countryside to prevent sprawl, well connected and biodiversity rich public parks, and a mix of public and private networks of well-managed, high-quality gardens, tree-lined streets and open spaces. - Acceptable impacts only on high quality agricultural land, important landscape features.
3. Environment/Amenity – Acceptable relationship with and impact on occupiers of existing properties and neighbouring areas/towns (maintaining adequate separation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acceptable relationship only with and impact on occupiers of existing properties and neighbouring areas / towns (maintaining adequate separation)
4. Transport – Incorporation of integrated and accessible sustainable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New Garden Cities should be located only where there are existing rapid public transport links to major cities, or where



Objective	Criteria
<p>transport systems, with walking, cycling and public transport designed to be the most attractive forms of local transport</p>	<p>real plans are already in place for its provision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Walking, cycling and public transport should be the most attractive and prioritised forms of transport in the garden city. - Ensure a comprehensive and safe network of footpaths and cycleways throughout the development, and public transport nodes within a short walking distance of all homes. - Where car travel is necessary, consideration should be made of shared transport approaches such as car clubs.
<p>5. Resilience - Positive contribution towards maintaining resilient town centres and identified regeneration and development priority areas and institutions (including Essex University)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Positive contribution towards town centres. - Positive contribution towards identified regeneration priority areas and institutions
<p>6. Housing – Provision of a mix of tenures, including affordable homes and a range of housing types (including self-build/custom build and gypsy and traveller pitches).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Garden Cities (should be) part of a wider strategic approach to meeting the nation’s housing needs. - An appropriate number of homes in a new Garden City must be ‘affordable’ for ordinary people. - Provide mixed-tenure homes and housing types that are genuinely affordable for everyone - An appropriate percentage of the homes that are classified as ‘affordable’ must be for social rent. - Consider life-time homes and the needs of particular social groups, such as the elderly. - A range of housing types including self-build / custom build and gypsy and traveller pitches - Aspire to the very best domestic and commercial architecture with sensitivity to local vernacular design and materials. - New Garden Cities should include opportunities for people to build their own home (either alone or collectively), and set aside land for future community needs.
<p>7. Employment Opportunities – Provision for a wide range of local jobs within easy commuting distance from homes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New Garden Cities must provide a full range of employment opportunities, with the aim of no less than one job per new household being easily accessible - There should be a robust range of employment opportunities in the Garden City itself, with a variety of jobs within easy commuting distance of homes.



Objective	Criteria
<p>8. Mixed-use Opportunities – Inclusion of cultural, recreational and shopping facilities in walkable, vibrant, sociable neighbourhoods.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inclusion of cultural, recreational and shopping facilities in walkable, vibrant, sociable neighbourhoods
<p>9. Environmental Quality & Sustainability – Incorporation of generous areas of publicly accessible open space, allotments/food production areas, biodiversity gains, SUDS and zero-carbon/energy-positive technology to ensure climate resilience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create shared spaces for social interaction and space for both formal and informal artistic activities, as well as sport and leisure activities. - Strong emphasis should be placed on homes with gardens and on space for both allotments and community gardens and orchards to provide for healthy local food. - Garden Cities are places of cultural diversity and vibrancy with design contributing to sociable neighbourhoods. This means, for example, shaping design with the needs of children’s play, teenage interests and the aspirations of elderly in mind. - Net gain to biodiversity is secured through master plans which link generous private and community gardens with wider public green and blue space and ultimately with strategic networks of green infrastructure and habitat creation. - Garden Cities must demonstrate the highest standards of technological innovation in zero carbon and energy positive technology to reduce the impact of climate emissions. - In building standards, a requirement for innovation beyond zero carbon and in the use of materials and construction techniques.
<p>10. Developability / Deliverability - The growth area is available, commercially attractive, and capable of delivering necessary physical/social/green infrastructure and could be viably developed within [6-10] years. Satisfactory mechanisms are in place to capture increase in land value to meet infrastructure costs and manage and maintain assets in the long term</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure that the development can self-fund infrastructure costs - Be commercially attractive with strong market conditions and value potential - Availability of land being put forward for development with active landowner/developer interest - Scope for delivery structures through active and positive public and private sector engagement

The basis for making judgements within the assessment of Garden Communities is identified within the following key:



Possible impact	Basis for judgement
++	Strong prospect of fully meeting criteria with significant wider benefits
+	Reasonable prospect of fully meeting criteria
?/-/+	Reasonable prospect of partially meeting criteria / uncertainty / mix of positive and negative impacts
-	Unlikely to fully meet criteria however mitigation possible regarding impacts
--	Unlikely to meet criteria without significant negative impacts (pending further detailed investigation regarding mitigation)



5. The Key Findings of the Sustainability Appraisal of Section One

5.1 Key Points from the Assessment of Section One Policies

The following elements of the Strategic Section One for Local Plans are subject to assessment in the Sustainability Appraisal, with a summary of findings presented in this Non-Technical Summary:

- Vision for the Strategic Area
- Strategic Objectives
- Policy SP1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- Policy SP2 – Spatial Strategy for North Essex
- Policy SP3 – Meeting Housing Needs
- Policy SP4 – Providing for Employment and Retail
- Policy SP5 – Infrastructure and Connectivity
- Policy SP6 – Place Shaping Principles
- Policy SP7 – Development and Delivery of New Garden Communities in Essex
- Policy SP8 – Tendring / Colchester Borders Garden Community
- Policy SP9 – Colchester / Braintree Garden Community
- Policy SP10 – West of Braintree Garden Community

The assessment of Garden Community Options can be found in the corresponding sub-section.

5.1.1 Key Points from the Assessment of Policies SP1-SP7

Policies SP1-SP7 relate to content that is not specifically site related. With that in mind, these policies have been grouped separately in this report, with Policies SP8-SP10 explored to determine whether they suitably address the impacts and issues highlighted within the assessment of the Garden Communities 'on the ground'. Policies SP8-SP10 set the framework to which any successful Garden Community at each location would have to adhere and seek to ensure that their sustainability is maximised.

The following key points can be made regarding the appraisal of the plan's non-site related policies SP1-SP7:

- The strategic vision for the area will have **significant positive impacts** on housing and employment related Sustainability Objectives. The significance of these impacts will increase in the long term through sustainable Garden Communities being developed. These will ensure that housing and employment needs are met, with wider benefits realised beyond each site. This will also be the case for health, the natural environment, and the historic environment through the provision of green infrastructure, new and expanded education and health care facilities and recreational land, and also the protection and enhancement of countryside and heritage assets. There will additionally be significant long term impacts on ensuring the necessary transport



infrastructure to support new development in line with the benefits expected of the Garden Communities as they emerge in the latter stages of the three authorities' Local Plan periods.

- The Spatial Strategy will ensure a large number of **significant positive impacts**, most notably regarding housing delivery, economic growth, public transport improvements and accessibility. The short and medium term impacts of these are related to the notion that development will be accommodated within or adjoining settlements according to their scale and existing role within each individual district.
- Further long term **significant positive impacts** associated with the notion of Garden Communities can be expected to be realised on health, through the integration and requirement of suitable facilities and open space and recreation requirements. There will also be such impacts on sustainable travel through the requirements of sustainable transportation means to be provided, and education and skills through the provision of primary, secondary and early years facilities as per Garden City Principles and Essex County Council infrastructure requirements. Importantly, it should additionally be noted that Section One establishes that infrastructure will be delivered prior and ready for the new communities.
- **Minor positive impacts** can be expected regarding townscapes, where the principle of Garden Communities can alleviate development pressures in existing settlements, which can have design implications. This focus away from the expansion of existing settlements will also help to alleviate air quality pressures in settlements.
- The Section One policies can be seen to ensure **positive impacts** on biodiversity through the integration of green and blue infrastructure throughout the strategic area.
- **Uncertain impacts** can be expected to arise from the principle of Garden Communities regarding landscapes through the development of green field land, however it should be acknowledged that at the specified scale, Garden Communities are capable of mitigating such concerns effectively and creating high quality new environments.
- There will be 'no impact' on internationally important wildlife designations in the wide area. This is identified in a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), incorporating an Appropriate Assessment (AA). This document recommends that, regarding recreational pressures associated with the increase in growth stated within the Section One, Recreation Avoidance and Mitigation Strategies (RAMS) are developed and adhered to. In addition, the AA indicates that the strategic approach and scope of the Section One across the three authorities area enables mitigation to be effectively incorporated.

5.1.2 Key Points from the Assessment of Policies SP8-SP10

The following key points can be made from the appraisal of Policies SP8-SP10:

- There will be **significant positive impacts** regarding any development that complies with the Garden Community policy for the Tendring / Colchester Borders. These include significant positive impacts on the regeneration areas within Colchester town centre and to the east of the town, related to better sustainable transport and more employment opportunities in the broad area.
- There will be largely **significantly positive impacts** generally regarding housing, employment and improving public transport networks in North Essex from all of the Policies SP8-SP10. There will also be significant positive impacts associated with improving the resilience of the town centres of

Colchester and Braintree and also green and blue infrastructure in the wider Strategic Area.

- An example where the policies have been identified as having **uncertain impacts** relates to an aspiration that an appropriate percentage of homes that are classified as 'affordable' be specifically for social rent. It is recommended that such a requirement is included within the policies.
- There can be expected to be **minor negative impacts** on agricultural land and landscapes due to the loss of agricultural land associated with Greenfield development. Regarding landscape however, the policies will ensure that development is of a high standard of design and layout to ensure that the best possible development outcomes are achieved in their broad areas.

5.2 Key Points from the Assessment of the Garden Community (GC) Options

The following table sets out the assessed sustainability impacts of all reasonable Garden Community options explored, with their reason for allocation or rejection as alternatives.

Option	Sub-Option	Reference number for purposes of assessment	Indicative dwelling yield and amount of mixed use / employment land (ha)	Reason for selection / rejection
Tending / Colchester Borders	Option 1: Southern Land Focus	GCEC1	- 6,611 homes - 7 ha mixed use - 5 ha employment land	The Tending / Colchester Borders Garden Community has more opportunities for sustainable travel links into Colchester than other options, a major regional centre. The Garden Community is also in close proximity to the University and high quality employment opportunities. As one of the major centres in the region, Colchester offers a full range of facilities including a hospital and is a major shopping and cultural destination. This would provide high order services not on the garden community within a closer proximity with the opportunities for public transport, walking and cycling links. Colchester is also a major employer in the region and provides a good level and mix of
	Option 2: A133 to Colchester - Ipswich rail line	GCEC2	- 8,834 homes - 10 ha mixed use - 5 ha employment land	
	Option 3: North to South wrap	GCEC3	- 11,409 homes - 13 ha mixed use - 7 ha employment land	

Option	Sub-Option	Reference number for purposes of assessment	Indicative dwelling yield and amount of mixed use / employment land (ha)	Reason for selection / rejection
				employment opportunities. There is the opportunity to access these opportunities via public transport, walking and cycling.
North Colchester	Option 1: East of Langham Lane focus	GCNC1	- 6,606 homes - 7 ha mixed use - 7 ha employment land	The discounting of the North Colchester site for a Garden Community was based on the negative environmental impacts of a large Garden Community on an area of significant landscape and environmental value. Additionally, the deliverability and sustainability of Garden Communities was considered to be best served by their location in two distinct areas of the Borough as opposed to adjacent communities such as North Colchester.
	Option 2: Maximum Land Take	GCNC2	- 10,132 homes - 10 ha mixed use - 10 ha employment land	
Colchester / Braintree Borders	Option 1: North and South of A12 / Rail Corridor Focus	GCWC1	- 16,861 homes - 9 ha mixed use - 10 ha employment land	The Colchester Braintree borders site is in closer proximity to the mainline railway station at Marks Tey, which with upgraded facilities would give regular train links to London, Colchester and beyond within walking, cycling or bus rapid transport system to the station. There are also more opportunities for sustainable travel links into Colchester, a major regional centre of facilities and employment. The Colchester Braintree borders site is in closer proximity to Colchester. As one of the major centres in the region, Colchester offers a full range of facilities including a hospital and
	Option 2: South of A120 and North of Marks Tey Existing Settlement	GCWC2	- 17,182 homes - 9 ha mixed use - 11 ha employment land	
	Option 3: South of A120 Focus	GCWC3	- 13,105 homes - 7 ha mixed use - 9 ha employment land	
	Option 4: Maximum Land Take	GCWC4	- 27,841 homes - 16 ha mixed use - 15 ha employment land	

Option	Sub-Option	Reference number for purposes of assessment	Indicative dwelling yield and amount of mixed use / employment land (ha)	Reason for selection / rejection
				<p>is a major shopping and cultural destination. This would provide high order services not on the garden community within a closer proximity with the opportunities for public transport, walking and cycling links.</p> <p>Colchester is also a major employer in the region and provides a good level and mix of employment opportunities. There is the opportunity to access these opportunities via public transport, walking and cycling.</p>
West of Braintree	Option 1: Braintree DC only	GCWB1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 9,665 homes - 12 ha mixed use - 10 ha employment land 	<p>The West of Braintree garden community is suitable and deliverable. Further work will continue to be undertaken with Uttlesford District Council who will be shortly deciding whether to take forward additional land within UDC. If UDC chose to take this option forward, then further evolutions of the proposals will take place, taking into account a wider development area.</p> <p>Officers have balanced the impacts of development, such as the loss of high quality agricultural land and the change in character of the area, with the benefits of the long term delivery of new homes, infrastructure and community facilities and consider that a new standalone garden community is suitable for West of Braintree and are recommending that this is taken forward in the</p>
	Option 2: Braintree DC and Uttlesford DC Land	GCWB2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 12,949 homes - 16 ha mixed use - 13 ha employment land 	



Option	Sub-Option	Reference number for purposes of assessment	Indicative dwelling yield and amount of mixed use / employment land (ha)	Reason for selection / rejection
				Local Plan.
CAUSE 'Colchester Metro Plan'	N/A - Option 1: Metro Plan submission	GCMP1	6,000 to 8,000 dwellings proposed by CAUSE Note: Further exploration into the option has led to only a cumulative potential of 2,277 dwellings across the four settlements as identified by TDC's call-for-sites submissions within 10 minute walking distance of each rail station and an indicative density of 35 dwellings per hectare.	The CAUSE option has been rejected due its inability to deliver the required growth, linked to deliverability / developability and the availability / lack of promotion of land within the model to the required scales. It is also not considered that a series of smaller developments can successfully combine to meet the requirements of sustainability / Garden City principles.
Monks Wood	N/A - Option 1: Proposal as submitted	GCMW1	- Up to 15,000 homes (5,151 homes in plan period) - 245,300m ² of non-residential (mix of commercial / retail / leisure etc.)	The option at Monks Wood is currently located on the highly trafficked and single carriageway section of the A120. The only other roads in the vicinity are very rural lanes in the vicinity and no opportunity to access a site of this size by other routes. If the A120 project is to go ahead, 1 of the 5 options could see the new A120 run through the site, the other 4 would be distant from the site. Whilst any upgrade option would provide capacity on the existing A120 network, there are no guarantees that the project will go forward. With the exception of option A travel to the strategic highway network would need to be via Marks Tey to the east or Braintree to the

Option	Sub-Option	Reference number for purposes of assessment	Indicative dwelling yield and amount of mixed use / employment land (ha)	Reason for selection / rejection
				west. In addition the project is not due to complete until 2026, so completions would not be able to start until that date. The employment market in Braintree is less strong than Colchester and major new employment areas are proposed on the west side of Braintree which is in close proximity to the West of Braintree garden community.

Table 3: Summary of Impacts of the Reasonable Garden Community (GC) Options

GC Option	Sustainability Objectives (SO)									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
GCEC1	?	?	+	+	++	++	++	++	++	++
GCEC2	?	?	+	+	++	++	++	++	++	+
GCEC3	?	?/-	?/+	+	++	++	++	++	++	+
GCNC1	?/-	-	?/-	?/-	+	++	+	++	++	+
GCNC2	?/-	-	?/-	?/-	+	++	+	++	++	?
GCWC1	?	?	?/-	?	?/+	++	+	++	++	?
GCWC2	?	?/-	?/-	?	?/+	++	+	++	++	?
GCWC3	?	?	?/-	?	?/+	++	+	++	++	?
GCWC4	?	-	?/-	?/-	?	++	+	++	++	?
GCWB1	?/-	?/-	?/-	?/-	?/+	++	?/+	++	++	?
GCWB2	?/-	?/-	?/-	?/-	?/+	++	?/+	++	++	?
GCMP1	-	--	--	+	++	--	?	?	-	--

GC Option	Sustainability Objectives (SO)									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
GCMW1	?	?/-	?/-	-	?/-	++	+	++	++	?

5.2.1 Overview of Impacts from the Garden Community Options Assessment

The most significantly positive impacts are associated with the Tendring / Colchester Borders Garden Community options, followed by the smaller West Braintree Garden Community sub-option. Those sub-options of the Colchester / Braintree Garden Community that do not seek maximum land-take will also offer largely positive outcomes, although there are additionally many uncertain impacts (i.e. ones that could either be positive or negative) at this stage and in the absence of confirmed master plans and solutions contained within a Garden Community specific DPD.

Negative impacts can be seen to be most significant through the Metro Plan option of delivering growth requirements. These impacts are largely due to the model not being able to meet Garden City principles, and no single development being of a scale of land that can reasonably be expected to mitigate any negative impacts on-site and within the identified areas.

The North Colchester option will have negative impacts associated with physical limitations on site, regarding landscape implications of being located in close proximity to an Area of Outstanding Beauty (AONB) and also the impacts associated with being an adjacent community to Colchester to the south. The options also do not benefit from any existing rail links, with effective public transport solutions limited as a result, however the broad location could be considered broadly sustainable aside from these limitations.

The Monks Wood proposal has issues regarding impacts on neighbouring settlements, a lack of rail links and access to the strategic road network. Pertinently, these latter two considerations will likely have significant negative connotations on the neighbouring settlement of Kelvedon, where the closest rail stations exist and where effective rapid bus transit solutions would be unsuitable for integration purposes.

5.3 Key Points from the Cumulative Assessment of the Allocated Garden Communities

5.3.1 Summary of Cumulative Impacts Resulting from the Allocated Garden Communities

The following cumulative conclusions can be made of the appraisal of the allocated Garden Community options:

Water

- The measures provided in the Section Two Local Plans provide sufficient certainty that the overall strategic growth proposed in North Essex as part of the Section One will not result in significant adverse effects on the Stour and Orwell Estuaries SPA/Ramsar, Colne Estuary SPA/Ramsar, or Essex Estuaries SAC as a result of changes in water quality (HRA / AA, 2017)



Accessibility

- It is not considered that there are any cumulative accessibility issues surrounding the preferred sites, due to their general geographic distribution.

Air Quality

- There may be some cumulative road traffic and associated air quality issues from any of the Garden Communities with any non-strategic site allocations in the Councils' respective Section Twos that are in close-proximity. This should be a focus of the Local Plans' Section Twos.

The Historic Environment

- Cumulative impacts are limited regarding historic environmental features due to the geographic dispersal of the Garden Communities.

Landscape

- Cumulative impacts are limited regarding landscape due to the geographic dispersal of the Garden Communities.

Biodiversity

- The AA identifies the need for a Recreation Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) to be developed and the findings factored into any policies, forthcoming masterplans or Garden Community specific DPDs should increases in the level of recreational land be required at any of the Garden Community allocations.

Neighbouring Properties / Coalescence with Existing Settlements

- There will be no cumulative impacts associated with the effects on occupiers of existing properties and neighbouring areas/towns resulting from the Garden Communities due to their geographic distribution. Garden City principles would have to be adhered to in regard to a surrounding belt of countryside to avoid sprawl, and this minimises any perceived coalescence and resulting impact on existing settlements.
- Cumulatively, no one existing settlement would be negatively affected by any combination of Garden Communities. More holistically, similarly can no single Landscape Character Area be affected by a combination of Garden Communities, of which existing historic settlements form an important part of integrity and sensitivity.
- Benefits will be realised for existing nearby communities regarding an increase in services and local infrastructure in the wider areas beyond the Garden Communities.

Public Transport

- There will be significant positive cumulative impacts resulting from the allocated Garden Communities in response to their individual potential to significantly improve public transport links within the North Essex Authorities area. Positive impacts can also be expected to benefit wider local areas in proximity to the Garden Communities.

Health

- The notion of Garden Communities will have positive synergistic impacts regarding health outcomes, with the level of growth required in the North Essex Authorities being provided through



developments that require walking, cycling and public transport designed to be the most attractive forms of local transport.

Town Centres

- There will be significant positive cumulative impacts resulting from the allocated Garden Communities in response to their individual potential to significantly support and improve the viability of the town centres of Colchester and Braintree within the North Essex Authorities area. Positive impacts can also be expected to benefit wider local areas in proximity to the Garden Communities, with enhanced public transport opportunities to such centres in the locality.

Housing

- All of the Garden Communities can be expected to have significantly positive impacts on housing growth. Cumulatively, these impacts become more positive over the plan period and beyond, with the ability to successfully integrate all housing types and tenures, including gypsy and traveller provision.

Employment

- All of the Garden Communities can be expected to have positive impacts on employment growth. Cumulatively, these impacts can become more positive over the plan period and beyond, with the ability to successfully integrate a wide range of local jobs within easy commuting distance from homes.
- Access and public transport requirements of Garden Communities may in practice result in out-commuting beyond each Garden Community and local centres within the North Essex Authorities area. This should not be considered a criticism of the Garden Communities, being more reflective of travel to work flows and commuting patterns within the North Essex Authorities area.

Mixed-use Developments

- All of the Garden Communities can be expected to have a strong prospect of providing the full suite of required mixed-use opportunities, including the provision of both primary and secondary schools. This will have significant cumulative benefits across the North Essex Authorities area and wider benefits for existing communities in the broad areas for each Garden Community.

Open Space and Sustainable Drainage Systems

- All of the Garden Communities can be expected to have a strong prospect of providing the full suite of open space, allotments/food production areas, biodiversity gains and SuDS. This will ensure cumulative benefits across the North Essex Authorities area and wider benefits for existing communities in the broad areas for each Garden Community.
- There are likely to be additional cumulative benefits associated with wider health outcomes outside the direct scope of the Garden City principles.
- In addition, the location and scale of any forthcoming recreational land that may be required could result in harmful impacts financially on existing Country Parks within the ECC Country Park model through increased competition.

Soil

- Cumulative impacts are limited regarding the loss of high quality soils due to the geographic

dispersal of the Garden Communities and quality of soils at each individual location.

Climatic Factors

- Whereas negative impacts can be expected regarding carbon emissions, this is more relevant to the level of growth. In this context, the Garden Communities can be expected to offer some small cumulative benefits in so far as energy efficiency can be ensured throughout development in accordance with Garden City principles and the wider policy framework within Section One to which any forthcoming planning applications would have to adhere.

5.4 The Sustainability of Section One as a Whole

The overall impacts of Section One can be seen in the following table. The table effectively represents the cumulative impacts of Section One's policies SP1-SP10. Commentary is given for each sustainability objective.

Table 4: Overall Impacts of Section One

SA Objective	Overall Impact
1. Create safe environments which improve quality of life, community cohesion	Positive impacts

The Strategic Section One for Local Plans can be seen to have positive impacts on this objective where relevant, predominantly through general place shaping principles and the policy criteria relevant specific to the Garden Communities. Although impacts are minor at this stage, impacts can be seen to be strengthened through the Local Plan Section Twos of the three authorities, with the inclusion of design orientated development management policies that will also apply.

SA Objective	Overall Impact
2. To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent, safe home which meets their needs at a price they can afford	Significant positive impacts

There will be significant positive effects in ensuring good quality and inclusive homes. Section One also ensures that objectively assessed housing needs are met throughout Local Plan periods within North Essex, particularly in accordance with each LPA's individual requirements. The Spatial Strategy directs growth to existing sustainable settlements in the first instance, and the Garden Communities ensure that growth needs are met not only in the latter stages of the plan periods, but also make a significant contribution to meeting future needs beyond plan periods. The Strategic Section One for Local Plans, in exploring options and solutions for meeting unmet elements of objectively assessed need over the strategic area will also ensure significant positive cumulative impacts on this objective in accumulation with the individual Spatial Strategies of each authority's Local Plan, including elements of non-strategic needs, and as per the LPA level requirements of the OAN Report. Regarding Policies SP8-10, largely significantly



positive impacts regard the specific policy principles that combine to offer social and economic benefits, such as housing, employment and improving public transport networks in North Essex.

SA Objective	Overall Impact
3. Improve health/reduce health inequalities	Significant positive impacts

There will be significantly positive health impacts associated with the cumulative effects of the Strategic Section One for Local Plans' policies and commitment to delivering Garden Communities as well as the Garden Community polices (SP8-10) themselves. This is largely due to a combination of health related infrastructure provision and also adherence to Garden City Principles regarding walking and cycling infrastructure and the provision of open space and recreational facilities. There will also be positive impacts in this regard associated with the content of each authority's Local Plan policies and designation of non-strategic open space and recreation.

SA Objective	Overall Impact
4. To ensure and improve the vitality & viability of centres	Significant positive impacts

There will be significant cumulative impacts on the town centres of Colchester and Braintree in line with the various policies within Section One. The Spatial Strategy will seek to locate development within such centres in the short-medium term, with long term benefits being experienced in the long term through better infrastructure and connectivity associated with the Garden Communities, particularly regarding public transport networks. There will also be significant positive impacts associated with the individual Section Twos of the Local Plans of Colchester and Braintree. The locations of the Garden Communities are likely to support the town centres of Colchester and Braintree, the two largest centres within the strategic area. Section One is unlikely to support the town centres of Clacton and Harwich within Tendring District, and Witham within Braintree District, however it should be noted that a large amount of non-strategic (within the context of the Section One) development is allocated in such centres within the Tendring District Council and Braintree District Council Local Plan Section Twos.

SA Objective	Overall Impact
5. To achieve a prosperous and sustainable economy that creates new jobs, improves the vitality and viability of centres and captures the economic benefits of international gateways	Significant positive impacts

There can be expected to be significant positive impacts regarding the requirements to ensure job creation through ensuring that employment requirements can be met throughout Local Plan periods within North Essex, particularly in the latter stages and in accordance with each LPA's individual requirements. The preferred strategic Spatial Strategy also conforms to as broad a geographical dispersal as possible across North Essex in light of available land and promoted sites. The Strategic Section One for Local Plans will also ensure significant positive cumulative impacts on this objective



in accumulation with the individual policies and allocations of each authority's Local Plan, including elements of non-strategic needs and content regarding the rural economy. The Garden Communities are located within locations in which existing strategic employment areas are accessible, with further positive impacts associated with specific employment provision at each Garden Community and with infrastructure commitments of an enhanced public transport offer to key centres.

SA Objective	Overall Impact
6. To value, conserve and enhance the natural environment, natural resources, biodiversity and geological diversity	Positive impacts

The Strategic Section One can be seen to have positive connotations on this objective. Although the level of growth established within Section One, and the allocation of Garden Communities, will lead to the development of significant areas of Greenfield land which could be expected to have negative implications, Section One can ensure effective enhancement to green and blue infrastructure for net biodiversity gains. The Appropriate Assessment indicates that, providing that the North Essex Authorities continue to collaborate and prepare necessary Recreation Avoidance and Mitigation Strategies (RAMS), and in close consultation with Natural England, and the RAMS are ready for implementation prior to adoption of the Section 1 and Section 2 Local Plans, the Strategic Section 1 Local Plans is not predicted to result in adverse effects on the integrity of the Stour and Orwell Estuaries SPA/Ramsar, Hamford Water SPA/Ramsar, Essex Estuaries SAC, Colne Estuary SPA/Ramsar, or Blackwater Estuary SPA/Ramsar, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects as a result of recreation. The AA adds that the strategic approach across the North Essex Authorities ensures that cumulative solutions to the possible recreational pressures on Natura 2000 sites can be mitigated successfully. It should be noted however that the findings of these RAMS will need to be adequately factored into any forthcoming masterplanning and Garden Community specific DPDs.

SA Objective	Overall Impact
7. To achieve more sustainable travel behaviour, reduce the need to travel and reduce congestion	Significant positive impacts

The policies of the Section One for Local Plans can be expected to have significantly positive impacts on this objective. The infrastructure requirements of the Garden Communities, in adhering to sustainable transport Garden City Principles, can be expected to offer wider benefits and gain for neighbouring areas, and the geographical distribution of the preferred Garden Community options ensure that these benefits can be experienced across all three authorities with an inclusive coverage across North Essex. The content of the Local Plan Section Twos ensure that suitable public transport and access solutions are forthcoming to support the Spatial Strategy's notion of focusing growth to existing settlements within the short-medium term of the plan period.

SA Objective	Overall Impact
8. To promote accessibility, ensure that development is located sustainably and makes efficient use of land, and ensure the necessary infrastructure to support new development	Significant positive impacts

The policies of the Strategic Section One for Local Plans can be expected to have significantly positive cumulative impacts on accessibility and infrastructure provision. The infrastructure requirements of the Garden Communities, in adhering to sustainable Garden City Principles can be expected to offer wider benefits and gain, particularly regarding accessibility associated with both transport and services for neighbouring areas, and the geographical distribution of the preferred Garden Community options. This ensures that these benefits can be experienced across all three authorities with an inclusive coverage across North Essex. The Garden Communities are of a sufficient size to stimulate educational infrastructure provision. It should also be noted that the interventionist approach of the North Essex Authorities ensures that both infrastructure provision is self-funded through each Garden Community, and that the approach to their development is one of 'infrastructure first'. In addition, the content of the Local Plan Section Twos ensure that suitable supporting infrastructure, including public transport and access solutions are forthcoming to support the Spatial Strategy's notion of focusing growth to existing settlements within the short-medium term of the plan period.

SA Objective	Overall Impact
9. To conserve and enhance historic and cultural heritage and assets and townscape character?	Positive impacts

Within the context of Section One, this objective is largely relevant to the specific Garden Community policies (SP8-10). There could be a perceived negative cumulative impact on the historic environment associated with strategic development at the scale proposed, but despite this, the policies have taken on board those recommendations of the Preferred Options SA and ensure that protection will occur in all instances with enhancement a significant possibility. Forthcoming masterplanning and Garden Community specific DPDs have the potential to enhance site specific assets and their settings and deliver a high quality built environment. Although a degree of uncertainty surrounds the status and content of the masterplans and DPDs and whether their content is appropriate to individual assets and designations, the general distribution of growth across the strategic area and the Section One policy content seeks to address any perceived or possible impacts on the historic environment. It should additionally be noted here however, that such issues are better addressed within the Local Plan Section Twos, with the inclusion of relevant thematic development management policies.

SA Objective	Overall Impact
10. To make efficient use of energy and reduce contributions to climatic change through mitigation and adaptation.	0

There will be positive impacts regarding energy efficiency as a result of the Section One policies, particularly through the



requirements of the Garden Community policies SP8-10. Despite this, Garden Communities have the potential to incorporate renewable energy generation, although it is uncertain at this stage whether such schemes will be sought. It should be acknowledged that requirements may form part of masterplans and the Garden Community specific DPDs. The impact is highlighted as a minor positive at this stage, in view of the policy content, what can currently be considered a feasible requirement, and in reflection of the early stages of each Garden Community's development through the planning system. It should also be noted that policies exist in the respective authorities; Local Plan Section Twos, with the inclusion of relevant thematic development management policies.

SA Objective	Overall Impact
11. To improve water quality and address water scarcity and sewerage capacity	Uncertain Impacts

It can reasonably be assumed that there could be likely negative implications regarding water scarcity and sewerage emanating from Section One relevant to the level of growth stated in Policy SP2, the Garden Community allocations, and the allocations for development in the Local Plan Section Twos. Despite this, the implications of this are best resolved on a site-by-site basis through early discussions with service providers on a plan-level and in certain areas as required. It should also be noted that all growth in the wider area can be expected to have such impacts; however in the specific context of Garden Communities, Policy SP7 seeks to ensure that such issues are not forthcoming from any successful planning application.

Regarding water quality the AA states that, 'whilst there are currently issues regarding capacity of water recycling centres in both Colchester Borough and Tendring District, with subsequent risks to European sites associated with changes in water quality, the safeguards which will be included within the Section 2 Local Plans for each, will ensure that a given development will not proceed until the necessary infrastructure upgrades have been provided as necessary in accordance with Anglian Water and Environment Agency advice.' It adds that, 'the measures provided in the Section 2 Local Plans will also provide sufficient certainty that the overall strategic growth proposed in North Essex as part of the Section 1 for Local Plans will not result in significant adverse effects on the Stour and Orwell Estuaries SPA/Ramsar, Colne Estuary SPA/Ramsar, or Essex Estuaries SAC as a result of changes in water quality.' There are therefore no impacts associated with water quality emanating from Section One.

SA Objective	Overall Impact
12. To reduce the risk of fluvial, coastal and surface water flooding	0

There are no significant identified flood risk concerns resulting from the policies and Garden Communities of Section One. A number of the Garden Community allocations contain small areas of Flood Risk Zones 2 and 3, however these are not significant in response to the scale of the schemes and can be successfully integrated into any open space or green infrastructure requirements. The policy content ensures that flood risk concerns will be considered in any forthcoming planning applications and it should be noted that the scale of the Garden Communities enables the integration of sustainable drainage techniques.



SA Objective	Overall Impact
13. To improve air quality	Positive impacts

There are no identified implications regarding air quality of the specific content of the policies and preferred Garden Community options contained in the Strategic Part for Local Plans. The Garden Community allocations, as per the Spatial Strategy, correspond to the best possible dispersal across the HMA to alleviate air quality issues in Colchester and associated with the A12 and A120. The stance of allocating Garden Communities as opposed to urban extensions seeks partly to ensure that new growth does not impact on AQMAs, such as those found in Colchester town. It can be expected that there could be some general negative connotations on air quality associated with the level of growth required in North Essex, however the distribution of growth and the policies of Section One seek to address this adequately.

SA Objective	Overall Impact
14. To conserve and enhance the quality of landscapes	Uncertain Impacts

There can be expected to be uncertain impacts on landscapes resulting from Section One. These impacts are relevant to the specific Garden Community allocations themselves. Potential negative impacts are associated with the scale of development required on Greenfield land, however policy exists to ensure that development is sensitive to its surroundings in each instance and within the context of wider landscape character areas. It should be noted that this is a general issue relevant to any new development. It should also be noted that beyond the principles contained in Policies SP8-SP10 masterplanning and the Garden Community specific DPDs have further potential to mitigate and minimise site specific issues and deliver a high quality built environment. Landscape related Section Two policies will also have to be adhered to in any successful application.

SA Objective	Overall Impact
15. To safeguard and enhance the quality of soil and mineral deposits?	Uncertain Impacts

There will be minimal impacts on safeguarding mineral deposits and the quality of soil associated with the policy content of Section One. The Garden Community allocation at West of Braintree contains a site allocated within the ECC Minerals Local Plan for mineral extraction. Although not considered an insurmountable problem, the implications of this are that the North Essex Authorities will have to work with the Minerals and Waste Planning Authority and the landowner / developer of this minerals site to seek compromises surrounding the restoration of the site for a use compatible with Garden City principles at the masterplanning stage and within the Garden Community specific DPD for West of Braintree. Uncertain overall impacts are therefore identified for Section one.



5.5 Recommendations, including those taken on board throughout the SA process

5.5.1 The Section One Policies

The following recommendations have been made throughout the appraisal of the Strategic Section One for Local Plans regarding the policies:

- At the Preferred Options stage, the SA recommended that **Policy SP6** could be more explicit as to the requirements of new development in regards to the historic environment and assets and also scope for the policy to regard surface water flood risk. Both of these recommendations have been factored into the Policy. The Preferred Options SA also recommended that the Policy could respond to aspirations to increase renewable energy generation in strategic scale development opportunities. This recommendation is still valid at this stage, and reiterated within this SA; however it should be acknowledged that such integration is not considered to affect the principle of any development coming forward compliant with Policy SP6, and that the requirement at this stage could be considered premature in light of the emerging Garden Community masterplans and what is viable and achievable. A final recommendation regarding Policy SP6 is that as written there may be some level of conflict between the principle that seeks green and blue infrastructure to be integrated with multi-functional public open space requirements. The incorporation of these should be considered separate requirements, as biodiversity features are unlikely to flourish through human disturbance.
- At the preferred options stage, the SA highlighted that for **Policy SP7**, heritage assets exist across all of the Garden Community areas (and additionally potential archaeological deposits that would need to be excavated). At that stage a recommendation was made that Policy SP7 could include a principle that masterplans seek ways to achieve quality and active management of heritage assets and the historic environment as part of a positive strategy for their conservation and enjoyment. This recommendation has since been incorporated into the Policy.
- It can be considered that the majority of the Garden Community options will have some degree of impact on agricultural land, landscape, sites of nature conservation and the historic environment / heritage assets. It should be acknowledged that such issues are not insurmountable at the scales of development proposed in the options and that effective masterplanning and Garden Community specific DPDs can seek to protect and enhance conditions further.
- At the preferred Options stage, the SA recommended that for **Policy SP9** requirements ensuring the protection and/or enhancement of Marks Tey Brickpit SSSI were included within the Policy, as identified by the fact that the broad location is in the SSSI's Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for the designation. This recommendation has been effectively factored into the policy.
- At the Preferred Options stage, the SA recommended that for **Policy SP10** requirements ensuring the protection and/or enhancement of the heritage asset of the Saling Hall conservation area and areas of deciduous woodland within and adjoining the site could additionally be included to factor in the Registered Park and Garden of Saling Grove. This recommendation has been effectively factored into the policy.
- It is recommended that a Recreation Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy (RAMS) is developed, as



recommended in the Appropriate Assessment (AA, 2017) and the findings factored into any policies, forthcoming masterplans or Garden Community specific DPDs should increases in the level of recreational land be required at any of the Garden Community allocations.

5.5.2 The Allocated Garden Communities

The following recommendations are made regarding the selection of Garden Community options within the three broad locations of the allocated Garden Communities.

Tendring / Colchester Borders

- The SA indicates that option GCEC1 is the most sustainable option, due to its smaller scale and therefore comparatively minimal impacts. Despite this, it is possible that mitigation might be required in the form of habitat creation and management at the Garden Community due to possible impacts on wintering birds, as identified within the AA. With this in mind, it may be more appropriate for a larger option to be considered in order to address this possible requirement. Option GCE3 will require some level of mitigation in regard to the presence of Bullock Wood SSSI, and it is recommended that this localised area be protected in future masterplans. It is recommended that severance issues surrounding the A137 are also addressed in masterplans and transport interconnectivity.

Colchester / Braintree Borders

- Options GCWC1 and GCWC3 represent, broadly, the most sustainable options within the Colchester / Braintree Borders area. Option GCWC1 contains the Marks Tey Brickpit SSSI, however its location at the north east boundary in each instance ensures that this designation can be protected and enhanced through the requirements of a surrounding belt of countryside to prevent sprawl and this is recommended. Issues surrounding the Domsey Brook should also be factored into any development of GCWC3as blue infrastructure. Options GCWC2 and GCWC4 are in close proximity to a Scheduled Monument (a Roman villa 450m south of Warren's Farm to the north) and could affect the setting of this asset, and enhancement of this asset should be sought within the wider detailed masterplan. Impacts on the residential amenity of the settlements of Marks Tey and Little Tey are issues surrounding the options GCWC1, GCWC2 and GCWC4. A buffer separation will likely be needed to be developed through masterplanning to minimise certain impacts on existing communities and these should be subject to community engagement.

West of Braintree

- The smaller option GCWB1is considered the most sustainable option in West of Braintree due an increased likelihood of negative impacts associated with nature conservation and heritage assets to the western boundary of option GCWB2. Both options will need to address the presence of heritage assets throughout the area, particularly in the north associated with the Conservation Area of Great Saling which contains a range of listed buildings including grade II as well as the Registered Park and Garden of Saling Grove, and seek enhancements at the masterplanning stage. It is also recommended that a buffer separation will likely be needed to be developed through masterplanning to minimise certain impacts on existing communities, specifically in relation to residents in Stebbing Green and Blake End. The masterplans should be subject to community engagement.



6. Next Steps & Monitoring

6.1 Consultation

This Environmental Report will be subject to consultation alongside the Local Plans of the three Local Planning Authorities. There are three statutory consultees or 'environmental authorities' that are required to be consulted for all Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment documents. These are:

- The Environment Agency;
- Natural England; and
- Historic England.

In addition to these, consultation will seek to engage the wider community in order to encompass comprehensive public engagement. The North Essex Authorities may additionally wish to invite comments from focussed groups, relevant stakeholders and interested parties. The detailed arrangements for consultation are to be determined by the North Essex Authorities.

The environmental authorities and public are to be given 'an early and effective opportunity' within appropriate time-frames to express their opinion. This includes the specific notification of the consultation documents and timeframes to those persons or bodies on the 'consultation databases' of the three LPAs. This reflects those persons or bodies who have commented on the SA in previous consultation stages.

PLEASE NOTE:

All comments on the content of this Environmental Report should be sent to each authority's online portal in line with the consultation arrangements of each's Local Plan Draft Publication consultation. Where consultation periods differ between each authority, the following links may need to be checked once consultation periods are live.

Comments should be focused on the detail of this SA that pertains to land use implications or issues relevant to each local authority area.

Please check the following links for more information, and direction to relevant consultation portals:

Regarding Braintree District Council:

https://www.braintree.gov.uk/info/200137/consultations/96/contribute_to_a_council_consultation

Regarding Colchester Borough Council:

<http://www.colchester.gov.uk/article/12650/Consultations>

Regarding Tendring District Council:

<http://www.tendringdc.gov.uk/consultation>



6.2 Adoption Statement

Upon adoption Local Plans will be accompanied by an Adoption Statement which will outline those monitoring indicators most appropriate for future monitoring of the Plan in line with Regulation 16 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. In accordance with Regulation 16 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, an Adoption Statement is required to address each of the following issues:

- How sustainability considerations have been integrated into the development plan document (Local Plan);
- How the options and consultation responses received on the development plan document (Local Plan) and sustainability appraisal reports have been taken into account;
- The reasons for choosing the development plan document (Local Plan) in light of other reasonable alternatives; and
- Monitoring measures.

6.3 Monitoring

The significant sustainability effects of implementing a Local Plan must be monitored in order to identify unforeseen adverse effects and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action. The Sustainability Framework contained in this report includes suggested indicators in order to monitor each of the Sustainability Objectives, however these may not all be collected due to limited resources and difficulty in data availability or collection.

Guidance stipulates that it is not necessary to monitor everything included within the Sustainability Framework, but that monitoring should focus on significant sustainability effects, e.g. those that indicate a likely breach of international, national or local legislation, that may give rise to irreversible damage or where there is uncertainty and monitoring would enable preventative or mitigation measures to be taken.

The monitoring indicators for each broad sustainability theme relevant to the North Essex area are included below.

Table 5: Monitoring Measures

SA Objective	Potential Indicators
1. Create safe environments which improve quality of life, community cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All crime – number of crimes per 1000 residents per annum - Number of new community facilities granted planning permission - Number of new cultural facilities granted planning permission, including places of worship
2. To ensure that everyone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The number of net additional dwellings

SA Objective	Potential Indicators
has the opportunity to live in a decent, safe home which meets their needs at a price they can afford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Affordable housing completions - Number of zero-carbon homes completed - Number of additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches - Number of starter homes completed - Number of homes for older people completed
3. Improve health/reduce health inequalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Percentage of new residential development within 30mins of public transport time of a GP or hospital - Percentage of new residential development that adheres to Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards - Percentage of new residential development within walking and cycling distance to schools - Percentage of new residential development within walking and cycling distance to sport and recreation facilities / open space
4. To ensure and improve the vitality & viability of centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Amount of completed retail, office and leisure development delivered (and in centres) - Amount of completed retail, office and leisure development across the three authority area
5. To achieve a prosperous and sustainable economy that creates new jobs, improves the vitality and viability of centres and captures the economic benefits of international gateways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Amount of floor space developed for employment, sqm - Successful employment use applications in rural areas - Number of jobs created in the ports - Number of developments approved associated with the tourism sector - Level 2 qualifications by working age residents. - Level 4 qualifications and above by working age residents. - Employment status of residents. - Average gross weekly earnings. - Standard Occupational Classification.
6. To value, conserve and enhance the natural environment, natural resources, biodiversity and geological diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impacts (direct and indirect) on designated sites - Amount of development in designated areas - Area of land offset for biodiversity
7. To achieve more	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Percentage of journeys to work by walking and cycling and percentage of journeys to

SA Objective	Potential Indicators
sustainable travel behaviour, reduce the need to travel and reduce congestion	work by public transport
8. To promote accessibility, ensure that development is located sustainably and makes efficient use of land, and ensure the necessary infrastructure to support new development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number / amount of new homes / employment development completed at ward level within Growth / Regeneration Areas - Percentage of new development within 30 minutes of community facilities (as defined by each authority) - Percentage of new residential development within 30 minutes of public transport time of a GP, hospital, primary and secondary school, employment and a major retail centre - Additional capacity of local schools / incidents of new school applications
9. To conserve and enhance historic and cultural heritage and assets and townscape character?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Percentage of new and converted dwellings on previously developed land - Number of listed buildings demolished, repaired or brought back to use, including locally listed buildings - New Conservation Area Appraisals adopted - Number of Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments, Conservation Areas, Registered Parks and Gardens (and percentage at risk) - Area of highly sensitive historic landscape characterisation type(s) which have been altered and their character eroded - Number of major development projects that enhance or detract from the significance of heritage assets or historic landscape character - Percentage of planning applications where archaeological investigations were required prior to approval or mitigation strategies developed or implemented
10. To make efficient use of energy and reduce contributions to climatic change through mitigation and adaptation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Total CO2 emissions - Renewable Energy Installed by Type - Number of zero carbon homes delivered
11. To improve water quality and address water scarcity and sewerage capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality of Rivers (number achieving ecological good status) - Number of planning permissions granted contrary to the advice of the Environment Agency on grounds of water quality
12. To reduce the risk of fluvial, coastal and surface	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of planning permissions granted contrary to the advice of the Environment Agency



SA Objective	Potential Indicators
water flooding	Agency on flood defence grounds - Number of SuDS schemes approved by ECC
13. To improve air quality	- Number of Air Quality Management Areas
14. To conserve and enhance the quality of landscapes	- Percentage of new and converted dwellings on previously developed land - Number of proposals permitted within areas noted for their high landscape value - Number of proposals permitted contrary to a desire to restrict coalescence
15. To safeguard and enhance the quality of soil and mineral deposits	- Percentage of new development on high quality agricultural land (ALC) - Number of developments proposed within MSAs - Contaminated land brought back into beneficial use, hectares



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