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East Devon Local Plan

SA/SEA Adoption Statement

Prepared by LUC
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1 Introduction

- 1.1 East Devon District Council (EDDC) adopted the East Devon Local Plan on 28th January 2016.
- 1.2 During the preparation of the East Devon Local Plan the Council was required by law to carry out a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the plan as it developed. Both the SA and SEA requirements were met through a single integrated process (referred to as SA), the method and findings of which were described in a number of SA reports published alongside the different versions of the East Devon Local Plan during its development.
- 1.3 Regulation 26 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations (2012) requires EDDC to make the final SA Report available alongside the Adopted Local Plan. The final SA Report for the East Devon Local Plan was prepared in August 2015 and reflects the Local Plan that was submitted to the Secretary of State for examination in August 2013, also incorporating the proposed changes to the Local Plan that were consulted on between April and June 2015 and the additional proposed changes that were published by EDDC in August 2015.

Requirement for the Adoption Statement

- 1.4 In addition to the requirement in Regulation 26 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations (2012) for publishing the final SA Report alongside the Adopted Local Plan, the SEA Regulations¹ also require a number of steps to be taken upon adoption of a local plan (in this case the East Devon Local Plan). Specifically, SEA Regulation 16 sets out the post-adoption procedures for the SEA and requires that, as soon as reasonably practicable after the adoption of a plan for which an SA/SEA has been carried out, the planning authority must make a copy of the plan publicly available alongside a copy of the SA report and an 'SEA adoption statement', and inform the public and consultation bodies about the availability of these documents. The consultation bodies are Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency. The SEA adoption statement must explain:
 - How environmental (and sustainability) considerations have been integrated into the plan.
 - How the Environmental Report (contained within the SA Report) has been taken into account during preparation of the plan.
 - How the opinions expressed by the public, consultation bodies and (where appropriate) other European Member States during consultation on the plan and the Environmental/SA Report have been taken into account.
 - The reasons for choosing the plan as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives considered.
 - The measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental and sustainability effects of the implementation of the plan.
- 1.5 As the SEA process was incorporated into the SA process, this document constitutes the SA/SEA Adoption Statement for the East Devon Local Plan. The document is structured according to the SEA Regulation requirements listed above:
 - **Section 2** summarises how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan by explaining who carried out the SA/SEA and what assessment framework was used.
 - **Section 3** summarises the links between the plan-making and SA/SEA processes and how the SA/SEA recommendations were taken into account.

¹ The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 - SI No. 1633.

- **Section 4** summarises the consultation opinions provided on the SA/SEA at each stage and describes what changes were made to the SA/SEA process in response to these comments.
- **Section 5** describes the alternatives/options considered as part of the Local Plan preparation process and why certain options were chosen.
- **Section 6** describes how the significant sustainability/environmental impacts of the Local Plan will be monitored.

2 How environmental and sustainability considerations have been integrated into the East Devon Local Plan

- 2.1 The SA (incorporating SEA) of the East Devon Local Plan was commenced by EDDC in 2008. Between 2009 and 2016 the SA work was carried out by an independent environmental planning consultancy, LUC, on behalf of EDDC. LUC has also prepared this SA Adoption Statement.
- 2.2 The purpose of the SA was to assist the Council in preparing the Local Plan by identifying the key sustainability/environmental issues facing the plan area, to predict what would be the likely effects of the Local Plan on these issues, and to put forward recommendations to improve the Local Plan. The aim was to ensure that the Local Plan has as many positive effects as possible and that any negative effects are avoided or mitigated as far as reasonably possible when the policies are implemented and result in new development within East Devon.
- 2.3 The SA was undertaken iteratively, such that at each stage of the Local Plan's preparation an assessment of the sustainability and environmental effects of the options for the Local Plan and subsequently its policies was made. SA Reports were produced to describe the approach taken, identify the likely effects and put forward recommendations to avoid or minimise negative effects identified or to enhance potential positive effects. In this way, environmental and sustainability considerations were integrated into the Local Plan as it was developed.
- 2.4 The way in which the environmental and sustainability effects of the Local Plan were described, analysed and compared was through the use of a set of SA objectives. The SA objectives for the Local Plan were developed by EDDC during the Scoping stage of the SA process, drawing on a review of relevant European, national and regional policies, plans and programmes and the objectives they contained. The resulting SA 'framework' comprised 20 SA objectives that were used to decide whether the Local Plan would be likely to achieve each objective.
- 2.5 The SA framework for the Local Plan was originally presented in the January 2008 SA Scoping Report (prepared at the time for the proposed Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy, which later became the Local Plan) and included a set of SA objectives covering all of the SEA topics listed in Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations. This SA framework was the main tool used at each stage of the SA for assessing the likely effects of the options and policies for the Local Plan. Using the same SA framework ensured that alternatives were assessed in a comparable way to the options previously considered as part of developing the East Devon Local Plan.
- 2.6 **Table 2.1** below presents the SA framework for East Devon's Local Plan. The final column shows how the "SEA topics" (listed in Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations as the topics to be covered in SEAs) were all covered by at least one of the SA objectives.

Table 2.1 SA Framework for the East Devon Local Plan

SA Objective	SEA topic(s) covered by objective
1. To ensure everybody has the opportunity to live in a decent home.	Material assets Population
2. To ensure that all groups of the population have access to community services.	Population
3. To provide for education, skills and lifelong learning to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. meet the needs of the local population ii. meet local employment needs 	Population

SA Objective	SEA topic(s) covered by objective
4. To improve the population's health	Population Human health
5. To reduce crime and fear of crime.	Population
6. To reduce noise levels and minimise exposure of people to unacceptable levels of noise pollution.	Human health
7. To maintain and improve cultural, social and leisure provision.	Population
8. To maintain and enhance built and historic assets.	Material assets Cultural heritage
9. To promote the conservation and wise use of land and protect and enhance the landscape character of East Devon.	Landscape
10. To maintain the local amenity, quality and character of the local environment.	Human health
11. To conserve and enhance the biodiversity of East Devon.	Biodiversity Flora Fauna
12. To promote and encourage non-car based modes of transport and reduce journey lengths.	Climatic factors
13. To maintain and enhance the environment in terms of air, soil and water quality.	Air Soil Water
14. To contribute towards a reduction in local emissions of greenhouse gases.	Climatic factors
15. To ensure that there is no increase in the risk of flooding.	Climatic factors Material assets Human health Water
16. To ensure energy consumption is as efficient as possible.	Climatic factors
17. To promote wise use of waste resources whilst reducing waste production and disposal.	Material assets
18. To maintain sustainable growth of employment for East Devon, to match levels of jobs with the economically active workforce.	Material assets Population
19. To maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of the Towns of East Devon.	Material assets Population
20. To encourage and accommodate both indigenous and inward investment.	Material assets Population

- 2.7 In addition to the use of the SA framework to assess the potential effects of Local Plan objectives, site options and policies as they were drafted, environmental and sustainability considerations were integrated into the Local Plan through close working between LUC and Council officers drafting the plan. Early draft sections of the Local Plan, including draft policies, were sent to LUC for appraisal and the SA team attended meetings to discuss the emerging plan during the process of carrying out the SA.
- 2.8 Finally, the Local Plan was also required to be subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) under the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) Regulations 2012². The purpose of HRA is to assess the impacts of a land-use plan against the conservation objectives of a European designated site for nature conservation and to ascertain whether it would adversely affect the integrity of that site. The HRA process for the East Devon Local Plan was undertaken separately from the SA but the findings of the HRA Reports informed the SA process where possible, particularly in relation to judging the potential effects on SA objective 11 (To conserve and enhance the biodiversity of East Devon).

² Statutory Instrument 2012 No. 1927.

3 How the Environmental/SA Report has been taken into account

- 3.1 As already stated, the SA process for the East Devon Local Plan was undertaken iteratively, such that an assessment of the sustainability and environmental effects was made at each stage of the Local Plan's development. SA Reports were produced to describe the approach taken and the potential effects identified, and to put forward recommendations to avoid or minimise negative effects or enhance positive effects. Council officers preparing the Local Plan took the SA findings and recommendations into account while making changes to the Plan before each round of public consultation.
- 3.2 **Table 3.1** overleaf shows how preparation of the SA Reports (which included the Environmental Report requirements) corresponded with each stage of the Local Plan preparation, and how any recommendations made in the SA were taken into account. In most cases, drafts of the SA Reports or Addendums were provided to the Council prior to the Local Plan documents being finalised for consultation so that any SA recommendations could be considered by EDDC in the final versions of the Local Plan.

Table 3.1: Iterations of the East Devon Local Plan and accompanying SA Work

Plan Iteration	Accompanying SA Work	How SA Report was taken into account
N/A	SA Scoping Report (January 2008) produced by EDDC	The scoping stage of the SA was undertaken by EDDC officers and involved compiling information about the social, economic and environmental baseline for the plan area as well as the policy context and key sustainability issues. The SA framework was then developed, setting out the SA objectives against which plan options initially, and subsequently policies, would be appraised.
	SA Scoping Evaluation Report (October 2009) produced by LUC. <i>Not made publicly available.</i>	LUC was commissioned in September 2009 by EDDC to undertake an evaluation of the SA Scoping Report and to complete the remainder of the stages in the SA process. The purpose of the evaluation was to ensure that the requirements of the SEA Directive had been met in the production of the Scoping Report and to consider the degree to which the report complied with the SA Guidance that was in place at the time. The evaluation process was documented in an Evaluation Report (October 2009). No significant issues were identified in relation to the Scoping Report that could not be adequately addressed later in the SA process, aside from the need to ensure that there is a clear link between the baseline information and the SA objectives. Some additional work was therefore carried out in order to strengthen the key sustainability issues and to better demonstrate this link. This work was undertaken prior to commencing the SA of the Issues and Options version of the Core Strategy, in order to ensure that the assessment of options was fully informed by a robust SA Scoping Report.
Issues and Options Consultation Report (December 2008)	Initial SA Report for the Core Strategy Issues and Options (August 2010)	The Issues and Options version of the Core Strategy was produced by EDDC and underwent a period of consultation between December 2008 and February 2009. The report presented the draft spatial vision and overarching objectives for East Devon, outlined the issues identified as being of particular local importance and considered a range of options for how these may be addressed. In addition, the Council prepared and published a further Issues and Options consultation paper (November 2009) regarding an extra option for an urban extension to Exeter at Redhayes/Blackhorse which had not been included in the original Issues and Options Consultation Report.
Further Issues and Options consultation paper (November 2009)		<p>LUC undertook the SA of the Issues and Options using the SA framework that was developed at the Scoping stage. Each option for the Core Strategy was assessed against each SA objective and a judgement was made with regards to the likely effect that the option would have on that objective. These judgements were recorded as a colour coded symbol and the scores were presented in a matrix, along with a brief justification for the judgement made.</p> <p>In December 2009 LUC conducted a workshop with EDDC Members and officers to discuss the SA process and the emerging findings to date. The outcomes of this workshop were taken into consideration by LUC when reviewing and finalising the SA work for the Issues and Options. The findings of the SA were then presented in an Initial Sustainability Appraisal Report (August 2010) in order to enable those developing the plan to consider the reasonable alternatives in the light of</p>

Plan Iteration	Accompanying SA Work	How SA Report was taken into account
		<p>information about their possible sustainability implications, and to help inform the development of the next iteration of the Core Strategy, the Preferred Approaches document. Where a range of distinct options had not been developed for a particular issue, a general commentary about the likely sustainability effects of various potential approaches was provided in the SA report.</p> <p>Overall, sustainability considerations were well presented in the supporting text of the Issues and Options Consultation Report. However, it was recognised that many of the likely sustainability effects would be more easily determined as more specific policies were developed from the options and taken forward to form the draft plan.</p>
Preferred Approach Core Strategy (September 2010)	SA Report for the Preferred Approaches version of the Core Strategy (September 2010)	<p>The Council took into account the SA findings for the Issues and Options as it produced the next iteration of the Core Strategy, the Preferred Approaches document, in September 2010.</p> <p>The Preferred Approaches version of the Core Strategy was subject to SA by LUC and the findings were presented in the SA Report for the Preferred Approaches version of the Core Strategy (September 2010). This report comprised an updated version of the Initial SA Report, reflecting the ongoing development of the DPD and fully documenting all stages of the SA process that had been undertaken to date. The likely significant effects of the Preferred Approaches version of the Core Strategy (both positive and negative) were clearly described and recommendations about the implementation of the plan were made. Potential mitigation measures that may be necessary were also identified.</p> <p>No cumulative significant negative effects were identified, but the Preferred Approaches Core Strategy was considered to have significant positive cumulative effects on SA objectives relating to ensuring people have decent homes, access to community services, cultural and leisure facilities and employment opportunities.</p> <p>A number of recommendations were made in the SA Report for the Preferred Approaches version of the Core Strategy regarding amendments that could be made to the Plan in order to improve its sustainability effects, several of which related to the need for an overarching development management policy to be included in the Plan. As the document was later restructured to also include a whole section of development management policies (now Part 2 of the Local Plan), this issue was addressed. A number of other specific recommendations were made in the SA Report, some of which were addressed in the next iteration of the Plan (the Consultation Draft Local Plan), while others were not and the SA therefore continued to make the same recommendations. All remaining recommendations were then addressed in the Publication Draft Local Plan in 2012.</p>

Plan Iteration	Accompanying SA Work	How SA Report was taken into account
<p>Consultation Draft Local Plan (December 2011)</p>	<p>Internal summary SA note for the Consultation Draft Local Plan (April 2012) <i>Not made publicly available.</i></p>	<p>Following the production of the Preferred Approaches version of the Core Strategy and the accompanying SA Report, due to the impending revocation of the South West Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), EDDC made the decision to revise the housing and employment land allocations that had previously been set out in the RSS, and to pursue the production of a new-style Local Plan.</p> <p>The Council prepared the Consultation Draft Local Plan which was published for consultation in December 2011. At the same time, the Consultation Draft version of the Local Plan was subject to SA using the same methodology as for the SA of the Core Strategy. Because of the close similarities between the draft 'strategies' (policies) set out in Part 1 of the Consultation Draft Local Plan and the previous Core Strategy Preferred Approaches, the SA matrices that were produced in relation to the Core Strategy in 2010 were updated to reflect the changes made. Where new draft strategies had been included which did not equate to any of the previous Preferred Approaches, these were also subject to SA. In addition, new SA matrices were produced in relation to Part 2 of the new Local Plan, which set out development management policies, as these policies had not previously been included in the plan or therefore subject to SA.</p> <p>The findings of the appraisal were reported to the Council in the form of an internal SA summary note, outlining the key findings and recommendations. The SA findings were taken into account by the Council as it prepared the next iteration of the Local Plan, although the summary document was not made publicly available at the time.</p>
<p>Proposed Submission Draft Local Plan (May 2012)</p>	<p>SA Report for the Proposed Submission Draft Local Plan (June 2012) <i>Not made publicly available.</i></p> <p>SA Report for the Proposed Submission Draft Local Plan, updated to include SA of alternatives to the proposed development management policies (August 2012) <i>Not made publicly available.</i></p>	<p>EDDC produced the Proposed Submission Draft Local Plan in May 2012, and the SA matrices prepared previously in relation to the 2011 Consultation Draft Local Plan were updated by LUC to reflect the changes made to the policies in both Parts 1 and 2 of the Local Plan. The findings were described in an updated version of the SA report which was sent to the Council in June 2012, but not published. Therefore, the SA findings were available to inform the Council's decision making as it prepared the next version of the Local Plan.</p> <p>While undertaking the SA work on that version of the Local Plan, the SA team advised EDDC that in order to meet the SEA Regulations, there was a need to consider whether there were any alternative approaches to the proposed development management policies in Part 2 of the Local Plan. EDDC officers, with assistance from LUC, identified where reasonable alternatives to the development management policies existed and these were subject to SA to identify any likely significant sustainability effects. This work was incorporated in a further update of the SA report.</p>

Plan Iteration	Accompanying SA Work	How SA Report was taken into account
Publication Draft Local Plan (November 2012)	<p>SA Report for the Publication Draft Local Plan (November 2012)</p> <hr/> <p>SA Addendum (October 2012) <i>Prepared by EDDC</i></p>	<p>The Proposed Submission Draft Local Plan went to East Devon’s Development Management Committee in summer 2012 and following that process, a number of changes were made to the Local Plan. These changes led to the production of the Publication Draft Local Plan in November 2012. The SA matrices for the Proposed Submission Draft Local Plan were updated by LUC to reflect the changes made to the plan policies.</p> <p>In addition to the strategic and development management policies, the specific site allocations included in the Local Plan were at this stage also subject to SA, along with the reasonable alternatives that were considered by EDDC. Detailed appraisal matrices for the allocated and alternative site options were presented in the SA Report for the Publication Draft Local Plan.</p> <p>The SA report for the Publication Draft Local Plan was published alongside the consultation on the Local Plan between November 2012 and January 2013. An SA Addendum was also produced in-house by EDDC in October 2012 and was published alongside the Publication Draft Local Plan and LUC’s full SA Report. That SA Addendum presented the SA findings for the development site options in the West End of East Devon District and along the A3052 corridor, including reasonable alternative options.</p>
Submission Local Plan (July 2013)	SA Addendum (July 2013)	<p>Following the consultation on the Publication Draft Local Plan and the SA Report (and the SA Addendum on the West End and A3052 Corridor site options), EDDC made a number of changes to the Local Plan before it was submitted. The Submission version of the Local Plan was very similar to the Publication Draft version, although amendments were made to some of the policies. The changes that were made were generally minor and no entirely new policies or site allocations were added to the Plan at this stage. Therefore, a fully updated SA report was not considered necessary and the implications of those changes for the SA findings reported previously were addressed through the production of an SA Addendum (July 2013). This SA Addendum also included an updated version of the SA work for the West End sites that was previously included in EDDC’s SA Addendum in October 2012. The July 2013 SA Addendum and October 2012 SA Report were submitted to the Secretary of State alongside the Local Plan in August 2013.</p>
Proposed Changes (April 2015)	Internal SA note on the Options for Proposed Changes (February 2015)	<p>Initial examination hearing sessions for the Local Plan were held between February and March 2014. The Inspector then called for a suspension of the examination process while further evidence gathering was undertaken, including the preparation of an up-to-date assessment of housing need.</p> <p>Once the additional technical assessment work requested by the Inspector was nearing completion, the Council identified a number of alternative options for potential policy changes to the Local Plan as</p>

Plan Iteration	Accompanying SA Work	How SA Report was taken into account
	SA Addendum for Proposed Changes (April 2015)	<p>submitted. These options were subject to SA by LUC in February 2015, with the findings being reported in an internal SA note to the Council. The findings of that SA work contributed to the development of a set of detailed proposed changes which were also subject to SA by LUC and the findings were reported in an SA Addendum (April 2015), which was published for consultation alongside the Proposed Changes to the Local Plan.</p> <p>The purpose of the SA Addendum was to consider the implications of the proposed changes for the findings of the SA process to date. The work drew on the SA findings reported on previously by LUC on behalf of EDDC (in the October 2012 SA Report and updated in the July 2013 SA Addendum) and assessed how the proposed changes would affect those conclusions. Consideration was also given to the revised cumulative effects of the Local Plan as a whole on the SA objectives, taking into account the proposed changes.</p>
Further Proposed Changes (August 2015)	Updated SA Report (August 2015)	<p>Following the consultation on the proposed changes, Examination hearings for the Local Plan resumed in early July 2015. As a result of discussions during the hearings, recent changes to Government policy and in response to concerns raised by Natural England, EDDC proposed some further changes to the Local Plan.</p> <p>The implications of the further changes for the SA findings to date were considered by LUC. At this time, the SA work carried out to date was collated into a full Updated SA Report (August 2015), which met all of the requirements of the SEA Regulations. This report comprised an updated version of the previous full SA report (October 2012) and incorporated the findings of the SA work undertaken since then (as described in the sections above) including the work set out in the July 2013 and April 2015 SA Addenda and the SA work for the August 2015 further proposed changes.</p>

4 How opinions of consultation bodies and the public have been taken into account

- 4.1 At each stage of the Local Plan's development, an SA Report was published alongside the Local Plan for consultation with the public and the consultation bodies specifically relating to the SEA Directive i.e. Historic England (formerly English Heritage), the Environment Agency and Natural England. The SEA Regulations require the SEA Adoption Statement to summarise how any opinions expressed by the public and the consultation bodies in relation the SEA have been taken into account.
- 4.2 The Local Plan consultation stages and responses received relating to the SA documents are summarised below.

SA Scoping (2008)

- 4.3 Prior to the production of the first iteration of the Local Plan (referred to at that time as the Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy), the SA Scoping Report for the LDF was produced by EDDC in August 2008. The SA Scoping Report was published for a five week consultation period with the statutory consultees (Natural England, the Environment Agency and English Heritage (now Historic England)) as well as an extensive number of additional stakeholders. The Scoping Report was also made available online in order to enable members of the public to participate in the consultation more easily.
- 4.4 The Scoping Report provided the opportunity for consultees to comment on a number of issues, including whether the objectives in the SA framework provided a reasonable framework though which to assess the likely significant effects of the LDF and whether the review of relevant plans, policies and programmes (the PPP review) and baseline information were appropriate and complete.
- 4.5 Following the consultation, comments received on the Scoping Report were taken into account by East Devon District Council officers and the Scoping Report was updated to take into account comments and suggestions where appropriate.

Issues and Options (2009-2010)

- 4.6 The Issues and Options version of the Core Strategy was produced by EDDC and underwent a period of consultation between December 2008 and February 2009. In addition, the Council prepared and published a further Issues and Options consultation paper (November 2009) regarding an extra option for an urban extension to Exeter at Redhayes/Blackhorse which had not been included in the original Issues and Options Consultation Report. LUC undertook the SA of this iteration of the Core Strategy on behalf of the Council and the findings were presented in an Initial Sustainability Appraisal Report (August 2010).
- 4.7 The Initial SA Report was published for consultation in August 2010 and any responses received in relation to the SA work undertaken to date were taken into account during the preparation of the SA Report for the Preferred Approaches document.

Preferred Approaches Stage (2010)

- 4.8 The Preferred Approaches version of the Core Strategy was produced by EDDC in September 2010 and was subject to SA by LUC, taking the same broad approach as at the Issues and Options stage. The findings of this appraisal were presented in the SA Report for the Preferred Approaches version of the Core Strategy (September 2010). The SA Report was published alongside the Core Strategy Preferred Approaches Consultation Document as it underwent a six week formal consultation period between September and November 2010, during which time the statutory consultees and members of the public were again invited to make comment on the emerging plan.

- 4.9 Responses received in relation to the consultation were analysed by the Council and summarised in the March 2011 document 'Feedback Report on LDF Consultation during 2010 Including Feedback on Core Strategy Preferred Approach Document Consultation'. No specific issues relating to the SA work were raised.

Consultation Draft Local Plan 2011-12

- 4.10 The Consultation Draft Local Plan underwent public consultation between December 2011 and January 2012, with over 1,400 comments being received during that time. At the same time, the Consultation Draft version of the Local Plan was subject to SA using the same methodology as for the SA of the Core Strategy.
- 4.11 The findings of the appraisal were reported to the Council in the form of an SA summary note, outlining the key findings and recommendations. This, along with the outcomes of the public consultation, helped to inform the production of the next iteration of the new Local Plan, the Proposed Submission version (May 2012).
- 4.12 A number of consultation responses received in relation to the Consultation Draft version of the Local Plan had referred to the need for SA to be undertaken, because an SA report had not been published alongside the Consultation Draft Local Plan. However, as described above, SA work was being undertaken and taken into account by the Council (although not yet published), however, a full SA Report was published for consultation alongside the Publication Draft in autumn 2012 – see below.

Appraisal of the Proposed Submission Draft Local Plan (May-July 2012)

- 4.13 The Council produced the Proposed Submission Draft Local Plan in May 2012, and the SA matrices prepared previously by LUC in relation to the 2011 Consultation Draft Local Plan were updated to reflect the changes made to the policies in both Parts 1 and 2 of the Local Plan. The findings were described in an updated version of the SA report which was sent to the Council in June 2012 but not published.

Appraisal of the Publication Draft Local Plan (August-October 2012)

- 4.14 The Proposed Submission Draft Local Plan went to East Devon's Development Management Committee in summer 2012 and following that process, a number of changes were made to the Local Plan. These changes led to the production of the Publication Draft Local Plan.
- 4.15 The SA report for the Publication Draft Local Plan was published for consultation alongside the Local Plan between November 2012 and January 2013. An SA Addendum was also produced in-house by EDDC in October 2012 and was published alongside the Publication Draft Local Plan and LUC's full SA Report. That SA Addendum presented the SA findings for the development site options in the West End of East Devon District and along the A3052 corridor, including reasonable alternative options.
- 4.16 Consultation comments received in relation to the SA documents were taken into account during the preparation of the SA Addendum for the Submission Local Plan. The comments received were listed in Appendix 2 of the July 2013 SA Addendum along with information about how each comment was addressed. Most of the SA-related consultation comments referred to the assumptions used in the SA of site options or disagreed with the SA findings for particular site options, and most came from developers and members of the public rather than the statutory consultees. In a number of cases references to the SA were made in the consultation responses that did not directly relate to the way in which the SA had been carried out, but rather which referred to the SA findings in making a wider point about the content of the Plan itself. Those comments were therefore not included in the Appendix and were instead considered by the Council alongside other comments on the content of the Local Plan itself.

Submission of the Local Plan (2013)

- 4.17 Following the consultation on the Publication Draft Local Plan and the SA Report (and the SA Addendum on the West End and A3052 Corridor site options), EDDC made a number of changes to the Local Plan before it was submitted. The Submission version of the Local Plan was very similar to the Publication Draft version; therefore a fully updated SA report was not considered

necessary and the implications of those changes for the SA findings reported previously were addressed through the production of an SA Addendum (July 2013). The July 2013 SA Addendum and October 2012 SA Report were submitted to the Secretary of State alongside the Local Plan in August 2013. Consultees wishing to comment on the Submission Local Plan and SA did so as part of the Examination process, summarised below).

Examination of the Local Plan (2013-2015)

- 4.18 As described previously, initial examination hearing sessions for the Local Plan were held between February and March 2014. No significant SA matters were raised during the initial hearing sessions. The Inspector then called for a suspension of the examination process while further evidence gathering was undertaken including the preparation of an up-to-date assessment of housing need.

Proposed Changes (April 2015)

- 4.19 Once the additional technical assessment work requested by the Inspector was nearing completion, the Council identified a number of alternative options for potential policy changes to the Local Plan as submitted. These options were subject to SA by LUC in February 2015, with the findings being reported in an internal SA note to the Council (this was not subject to public consultation). The findings of that SA work contributed to the development of a set of detailed proposed changes which were also subject to SA by LUC and the findings were reported in an SA Addendum (April 2015).
- 4.20 The SA Addendum was published for consultation alongside the Proposed Changes between April and June 2015. Some of the responses received referred to the SA work, although in most cases the SA was referred to only to support a point being made by the consultee, rather than comments directly relating to the approach taken to the SA and the content of the SA Addendum. However, two consultees including Natural England, made a number of comments about the SA. Natural England was concerned that the SA work since the Publication Draft Local Plan consultation at the end of 2012 was set out in SA Addenda rather than a full SA report, and commented on the information sources used to inform the SA. The other consultee noted that the February 2015 SA Addendum, which appraised the spatial distribution options for additional housing provision, was not made available for consultation by EDDC. Those comments were addressed through the production of a full Updated SA Report (August 2015), which described the options considered and appraised since the Publication Draft Local Plan, and presented in Chapters 5 and 6 the SA findings of the potential effects of the East Devon Local Plan as submitted and incorporating all of the proposed changes consulted upon since the Examination commenced.

Further proposed changes (August 2015)

- 4.21 Following the consultation on the proposed changes, Examination hearings for the Local Plan resumed in early July 2015. As a result of discussions during the hearings, recent changes to Government policy and in response to concerns raised by Natural England, EDDC proposed some further changes to the Local Plan. These proposed changes sought to satisfy concerns raised by Natural England during the examination process, most of which related to the potential for the Local Plan to have likely significant effects on European designated biodiversity sites and the extent to which adequate mitigation could be achieved through Strategies 10 and 47. In addition, Natural England was concerned that particular developments at Exmouth that were referred to in Strategy 22 were identified in the HRA of the Exmouth Masterplan as having potential significant effects on European sites.
- 4.22 The implications of the further changes for the SA findings were considered by LUC and as described above, in response to comments received from Natural England, the SA work carried out to date was collated into a full Updated SA Report (August 2015) which met all of the requirements of the SEA Regulations.

5 Why the adopted Local Plan was chosen in light of reasonable alternatives

- 5.1 The options or reasonable alternatives considered during the development of East Devon's Local Plan included the overall spatial strategy for the district, potential sites for new housing and employment development at the West End and the market towns and alternative policy approaches for the strategic policies and general development management policies. There have been a number of stages in developing, appraising and refining the plan options, as described in Chapter 4 of the August 2015 Updated SA Report for the final version of the Local Plan, and summarised below.

Issues and Options (2009-2010)

- 5.2 EDDC produced the Core Strategy Issues and Options document in 2008 which was subject to public consultation between December 2008 and February 2009. The report presented the draft spatial vision and objectives for East Devon, outlined the issues identified as being of particular local importance and considered a range of options for how these may be addressed. In addition, the Council prepared and published a further Issues and Options consultation paper (November 2009) regarding an extra option for an urban extension to Exeter at Redhayes/Blackhorse.
- 5.3 The alternatives that the Issues and Options Consultation Report addressed were all appraised where possible as part of the SA process. For some of the Core Strategy issues, alternative options were not specified so a short description of the potential sustainability effects of those issues was provided. LUC also conducted a workshop with EDDC members and officers in December 2009, in order to discuss the SA process and the emerging findings to date. The findings of the workshop were taken into consideration when finalising the SA of the Issues and Options. The full appraisal of the Issues and Options was presented in the Initial SA Report (August 2010) and the key conclusions of the SA for each Issue are summarised below. The findings are grouped under the headings used in the Core Strategy Issues and Options document.

Pen Portrait of East Devon and Spatial Vision and Objectives

- 5.4 The Spatial Vision and Objectives section of the Issues and Options document set out 10 objectives which were found to have generally positive effects, although the effects of overarching objective 7 in particular were more mixed as the objective involved focusing development in the West End, which may draw facilities, services and employment opportunities away from other parts of the District.
- 5.5 As expected with a vision and the associated objectives, there was a significant amount of uncertainty associated with their likely effects as the more detailed options specifying the exact location and nature of development will determine most of the likely impacts.

Sustainable Development and Climate Change

- 5.6 The Issues and Options Report raised a number of questions regarding the appropriateness of giving primary or significant weight to the technical demands of achieving low or zero carbon development in evaluating options for where and how additional development should take place, both in East Devon's West End and elsewhere in the District. In addition, opinions were sought regarding the level of renewable energy production to be sought, and the appropriateness of identifying specific sites and areas for renewable energy production.
- 5.7 The SA noted that climate change is one of the most significant challenges to be addressed and the issue needs to be given due consideration in decision making, therefore it was encouraging that this was one of the first issues discussed in the Core Strategy Issues & Options Consultation Report. Innovative solutions need to be sought to ensure that other sustainability considerations (such as the conservation and enhancement of the landscape) do not constrain low and zero

carbon development as it is often possible to achieve positive outcomes where there may initially appear to be conflicting concerns.

- 5.8 The SA recognised that allocating specific sites for renewable energy production sends a positive message to developers that the District is proactive in encouraging renewable and low carbon energy generation. The SA therefore highlighted the potential sustainability benefits of pursuing reduced energy use followed by on-site renewable energy generation.

Strategic Direction and Scale of Growth

- 5.9 The strategic direction and scale of growth section of the Issues and Options Report raised questions regarding the amount and distribution of housing and employment land to be provided throughout the District. It drew heavily on the requirements of the now-revoked South West RSS in terms of housing provision, including the strategic allocation at Cranbrook.
- 5.10 The SA Report noted that there needs to be flexibility in providing different levels of affordable housing to ensure that there is a good mix of household types throughout the District. This will help to support the economy and to retain key services such as schools where they are needed.
- 5.11 It was also recognised that achieving a high level of self-containment within towns and villages generally has significant sustainability benefits.

Major Growth in East Devon's West End

- 5.12 This section of the Issues and Options Report sought to address the provision of employment land in East Devon's West End, and set out a number of options including:
- Expansion of Skypark.
 - Expansion in the vicinity of the proposed Science Park.
 - Expansion of the Airport Business Park.
 - Provision of further employment land at Cranbrook new community.
 - Provision of mixed employment and residential development.
- 5.13 Eight options for the expansion of Cranbrook were also set out, as follows:
- Expansion to the west across to Station Road.
 - Expansion to the south west, north of the Treasbeare Farm ridge line.
 - Expansion to the south.
 - Expansion to the north east, to the east of Burrow Road.
 - Expansion to the east across to the stream running between Hand and Pen and Southbrook.
 - Expansion to the south east.
 - Expansion to the east of the stream running between Hand and Pen and Southbrook.
 - Expansion to the east of the lane running between Little Cobden and Crockernhayes.
- 5.14 The SA noted that locating employment provision in the West End of the District will help to protect more environmentally sensitive areas of East Devon from development and will ensure that it is well situated in terms of links to key population centres such as Exeter and to the rest of the country. It also noted the potential benefits of locating employment provision close to the main population centres relating to sustainable transport use need to be fully exploited by incorporating the necessary infrastructure provision into proposals for the West End wherever appropriate.
- 5.15 The SA recognised that a careful balance needs to be achieved in order to ensure that major growth in the West End protects environmentally sensitive areas across the rest of East Devon but at the same time does not reduce the viability and vitality of the market towns within the District, particularly those furthest to the east.
- 5.16 The SA recommended that green infrastructure principles should be incorporated in the design, layout and siting of all major developments in the West End, ensuring that environmental services are retained and enhanced and that building design is sensitive to, and enhances, local character.

- 5.17 The risk of flooding was highlighted in the SA as a significant concern in relation to major developments in the West End and their siting and design needs to take account of this issue. It was also noted that developments of all types that are located in close proximity to the airport are likely to experience significant noise disturbance from air traffic.
- 5.18 The Issues and Options document also presented options for a new community, either through development adjoining Pinhoe, at Clyst St Mary/Westpoint, or at an alternative site. The SA Report concluded that establishing a second new community in the West End would be likely to incur a mixture of both positive and negative sustainability effects, regardless of its specific location within this part of the District.

Development on the A3052 Corridor

- 5.19 Development potential along the A3052 Corridor was highlighted in the Core Strategy Issues and Options to recognise the fact that Area of Search 4B in the proposed changes to the now-revoked RSS was diagrammatically indicated as extending into East Devon for an undefined distance that includes some of the A3052 corridor. It was noted that this part of the District did offer potentially significant development opportunities and was already home to a number of significant developments/businesses. The question was raised regarding whether employment sites and other commercial/tourism business in the A3052 Corridor should be expanded to meet employment needs and job creation opportunities.
- 5.20 The SA concluded that this option was likely to have significant negative effects on the natural environment as the number of car trips made would be expected to increase notably in this area, and because the route cuts directly through two designated nature conservation sites (East Devon Pebblebed Heaths SAC and East Devon Heaths SPA).
- 5.21 The SA noted that employment development in the west of the District is likely to be more sustainable overall if it is located within the West End or close to existing developments. Businesses located away from existing settlements may be beneficial in more sensitive and constrained locations, such as those to the east of the District, but given the proximity to Exeter and the potential large-scale employment growth in the West End, developing the A3052 corridor appeared to be a less sustainable option.

Axminster

- 5.22 Four options for the expansion of Axminster were presented, either to the north, west or south of the town, or as infill development near to the town centre. The SA noted that significant growth in and around Axminster as proposed in these options may have significant positive impacts in relation to the vitality and viability of the eastern part of District and may help to reduce the pull of people and economic activities to Exeter and the West End whilst bolstering the already well-established local economy.

Budleigh Salterton

- 5.23 No specific options for growth at Budleigh Salterton were set out in the Issues and Options Report; however a question was raised regarding the scale of residential and employment development that would be appropriate at the town. The SA concluded that, given the constrained nature of Budleigh Salterton, additional development may result in adverse effects on the landscape and the wider natural environment. Although there were potential economic and social benefits associated with development at the town (for example reducing trip generation), given the proximity of other settlements, the additional development required may be better located in other less constrained settlements nearby, such as Exmouth.

Exmouth

- 5.24 Four options for the growth of Exmouth were presented, either to the north, east or south, or as infill development within the existing built up area. The SA noted that the increased development of this already fairly large town of 36,000 residents could potentially lead to increased self-containment and greater independence from Exeter. Its proximity to the city was highlighted as a key strength, being one of the few settlements in the District that can draw off the amenities, services and economic potential offered by a nearby city.

- 5.25 It was also noted that development in Exmouth would offer an opportunity to regenerate much of the town's built environment and should have social benefits such as improvements to the health and wellbeing of the local population.

Honiton

- 5.26 Five options for the growth of Honiton were presented, either to the north, south, east or west, or as infill development within the existing built up area. The SA noted that this growth means that Honiton's relatively good public transport links should be able to be exploited, with new development in the town being likely to benefit significantly from the presence of this existing infrastructure.
- 5.27 The SA also stated that community facilities, services and employment opportunities would need to be significantly improved if additional housing was to be located in the town as there was already a deficit in provision.
- 5.28 It was recognised that development in Honiton would be likely to benefit the vitality and viability of the east of the District, reducing the need to travel to the west of East Devon to access services, facilities and jobs in Exeter and the wider urban fringe area.

Ottery St Mary

- 5.29 Five options for the growth of Ottery St Mary were presented, either to the north, south, east or west, or as infill development within the existing built up area. Given the location of Ottery St Mary in between Exeter, Honiton and Cranbrook/the West End, the SA noted that care would need to be taken to avoid it becoming a dormitory town with unsustainable live-work patterns.

Seaton

- 5.30 Three options for the growth of Seaton were presented, either to the north or north-west, or as infill development within the existing built up area. Seaton is highly constrained and it was recognised in the SA that the need to avoid harming the natural environment and character of the town through development could limit growth.
- 5.31 The SA also noted that development in and around the town may have significant social and economic benefits, regenerating Seaton and boosting its vitality and viability. The promotion of green tourism (as included in the options) is one way in which these potential social and economic benefits could be achieved whilst minimising adverse impacts on the natural environment.
- 5.32 The suggested that a more flexible approach to affordable housing may be particularly necessary in Seaton if development is promoted within the existing urban area, as development sites are likely to be small to require a particular proportion to be provided as affordable housing.

Sidmouth

- 5.33 Four options for the growth of Sidmouth were presented, either to the north, north-west or east, or as infill development within the existing built up area. The SA noted that Sidmouth was in a similar position to Seaton, being highly constrained, and again measures to avoid harming the natural environment and character of the town would be likely to limit growth. However, it was also noted that development offers an opportunity for regeneration of the town and for the delivery of social and economic benefits.

Promoting Vibrant and Sustainable Rural Communities

- 5.34 This part of the Issues and Option Report related to the promotion of sustainable communities and raised questions regarding the level and location of growth that would be appropriate in rural areas. It also posed questions about the level of affordable housing that would be appropriate and the approach to restricting the occupation of new housing (i.e. to local people only) and to the potential reuse of agricultural dwellings. The SA recognised that flexibility would be required when developing policy and setting targets for affordable housing, in order to ensure that the maximum affordable housing provision is achieved without deterring potential developers from the District.
- 5.35 It was concluded that while the distance between housing and amenities, services and employment sites should be minimised, in particular circumstances the impacts of a greater distance may actually be preferable to locating development close together, e.g. where this provides some protection to the landscape or other environmental assets.

Preferred Approaches stage 2010

- 5.36 The findings of SA of the Issues and Options report (summarised above) contributed to the development of the Preferred Approaches version of the Core Strategy. No new reasonable alternative options were introduced in the Preferred Approaches Core Strategy; therefore the appraisal of options at the Issues and Options stage continued to represent the reasonable alternatives to the Preferred Approaches Core Strategy. The policies in that version of the Plan were also subject to SA and the outcomes of that appraisal, including the recommendations made, contributed to the development of the policies that were set out in subsequent versions of the Local Plan. Recommendations made in the SA Report for the Preferred Approaches related to amendments to policy wording in order to improve the likely effects of the policies on the SA objectives and to provide stronger mitigation for potential effects identified.

Consultation Draft and Publication Draft Local Plan 2011-12

- 5.37 The strategic policies presented in the Consultation Draft Local Plan (December 2011) were developed taking into consideration the consultation responses received and the SA findings from the work carried out in relation to the Preferred Approaches. The strategic policies that were then presented in the Publication Draft Local Plan (November 2012) comprised slightly amended versions of the Consultation Draft Local Plan policies, which had been revised to take into account consultation responses received and the SA work that was undertaken in relation to the Consultation Draft Plan and the interim Proposed Submission Draft (May 2012). Part 1 of the Publication Draft Local Plan (2012) therefore consisted of strategic policies which had been developed from the reasonable alternatives set out in the Preferred Approaches version of the Core Strategy.
- 5.38 In trying to meet the Government's requirements for the new Local Plan, Part 2 of the Consultation Draft Local Plan (December 2011) presented development management policies which were taken from the adopted East Devon Local Plan (2006) (these policies were not previously included in the early iterations of the Core Strategy). The suite of development management policies presented in the Consultation Draft Local Plan were subject to consultation and the responses received, as well as the SA work that had been undertaken in relation to the Plan, fed into the drafting of the development management policies that were then set out in the Publication Draft Local Plan (November 2012). As these development management policies were generally criteria-based, and must comply with national policy, in many cases no reasonable alternatives were identified. However, in order to ensure that the requirements of the SEA Regulations were met, and reasonable alternatives considered, EDDC officers, with assistance from LUC, identified where reasonable alternatives to the development management policies existed. Further work to appraise alternative approaches to the development management policies was carried out prior to the Publication consultation. This work was presented in the SA Report for the Publication Draft Local Plan and is summarised below.
- 5.39 Three of the development management policies that were included in Part 2 of the 2011 Consultation Draft Local Plan were moved into the Strategic Policy section of Part 1 in the Publication Draft Local Plan. In that document, these policies were referred to as Strategy 6: Development within Built-Up Area Boundaries, Strategy 7: Development in the Countryside, and Strategy 8: Development in Green Wedges. The alternatives identified for these three policies were appraised within their relevant SA matrix in Appendix 3 of the SA report for the Publication Draft Local Plan. In summary, the alternative policy approaches would have generally similar, but less pronounced sustainability effects and were not considered to be more sustainable than the wording in the Publication Draft Local Plan.
- 5.40 The 77 development management policies included in the Publication Draft Local Plan were unlikely to affect a number of the SA objectives, but were likely to have a number of minor and some significant positive effects generally in relation to the environmental SA objectives, as the policies required additional consideration of protection and enhancement of local environmental assets when new development is being proposed in the District. In contrast, minor negative effects were identified for many of the social and economic objectives, as the provision of housing, community services and cultural, social and leisure development may be discouraged and consequently employment opportunities may be limited due to the restrictive nature of the policies in relation to environmental protection.

- 5.41 For three of the policies (RC5, RC6 and RC7) no reasonable alternatives were identified because the NPPF requires local planning authorities to plan positively for the provision of shared space and community facilities, which these policies addressed.
- 5.42 In the case of 41 of the development management policies (e.g. DM Policies EN1, TC2 and E19), the only reasonable alternative identified would be to not have the specific policy in the Local Plan and to instead rely on national policy. Where this is the case, the likely sustainability effects of taking that approach (i.e. not having the development management policy in the Local Plan) were described. In some of these cases (for example in relation to emissions to air and water from development), national regulations and standards would still apply, which would mean that the sustainability effects of not having the policy would be broadly unchanged. However, the effects may be less pronounced if these emissions were referred to in the Local Plan policies, as a Local Plan policy may be better able to address specific local circumstances.
- 5.43 In the case of the other 33 policies (e.g. DM Policies D1, D4 and TC1), reasonable alternatives other than simply relying on national policy were able to be identified – these mainly comprised policy approaches that were either more or less stringent than the development management policy as drafted, for example where a policy quantified a proportion or size of development that would be allowed in particular circumstances. Where this was the case, the likely sustainability effects of changing these standards were described. In general, the likely SA effects would be either more or less pronounced depending on whether the identified standards were to be made more stringent or relaxed.
- 5.44 Most of the identified reasonable alternatives for the 77 development management policies were not considered to be more appropriate in sustainability terms for inclusion in the Local Plan than the Part 2 policies set out in the Publication Draft Local Plan. However, it was concluded that the two alternatives for Policy H7: Sites for Gypsies and Travellers (prepare a specific SPD for these sites or allocate specific sites on the Proposals Map) may be more likely to result in significant positive effects on homes, community services, health and amenity than the policy as drafted, as they would reflect and respond to specific local circumstances, and give more certainty to provision of these sites. However, no recommendation was made by the SA team to adopt either of these two alternatives as an assessment undertaken by the Council had shown a low need for Gypsy and Traveller sites within the District.

Site Specific Allocations

- 5.45 The Publication Draft version of the Local Plan (November 2012) included a number of site specific allocations for residential, employment and mixed-use development. These were subject to SA, along with all reasonable alternative site options identified, in line with the requirements of the SEA Directive. The findings of the appraisal of allocated sites and reasonable alternatives were described in the October 2012 SA Report for the Publication Draft Local Plan.
- 5.46 The site options that were assessed were those that featured in the 2011 and/or 2012 Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) exercise and/or were submitted as proposed development sites when the Local Plan (formerly the Core Strategy) was consulted on previously. In a limited number of other cases, sites that EDDC was aware of as having development potential were also included. EDDC chose to look at as many reasonable site choices as possible (where they were supported by a land owner/agent aspiration to see development occur).

West End and A3052 Site Options

- 5.47 An SA Addendum was also produced in-house by EDDC in October 2012 and was published alongside the Publication Draft Local Plan and LUC's full SA Report. That SA Addendum related to the development site options in the West End of East Devon District and along the A3052 corridor³, including reasonable alternative options. It was produced because the appraisal of those specific site options was not included in the full October 2012 SA Report. While the West End site allocations had been considered within the SA Report as part of the appraisal of the strategic policies within which they are allocated⁴, the SA Addendum sought to ensure that all

³ Note that, as described in the October 2012 SA Addendum, none of the A3052 corridor sites were considered to be reasonable options for strategic development sites. Therefore, they were not required to be subject to SA and all appraisal work in the SA Addendum related to the West End site options only.

⁴ The Local Plan includes a number of strategic policies relating to development in East Devon's West End, with a policy for each broad location (e.g. Cranbrook, Pinhoe, North of Blackhorse). Within the strategic policy for each broad development location, one or more

reasonable alternative options to those sites were also appraised. It also ensured that each of the West End sites were subject to SA on their own merits (e.g. without taking into account other elements of the strategic policies in which they were allocated), in the same way that the site allocations for each of the market towns had been.

- 5.48 This work was later revised by LUC as part of the preparation of the SA Addendum for the Submission Local Plan in 2013 and the options considered are summarised in that section below.

Submission Local Plan 2013

- 5.49 Before it was submitted to the Secretary of State for examination, a small number of minor wording changes were made to the policies in the Publication Draft Local Plan. The alternative was to leave the policy wording as it was drafted in the Publication Draft Local Plan. The implications of those wording changes in terms of the SA were addressed through the production of an SA Addendum, which was submitted along with the Local Plan.

SA implications of changes to the Local Plan prior to Submission

- 5.50 The minor wording changes that were made to the Local Plan policies prior to Submission in all cases made the SA scores more positive, particularly in relation to SA objectives 8 (historic environment) and 9 (landscape character), where a number of previously minor positive effects were now expected to be significant.
- 5.51 Potential but uncertain positive effects in relation to SA objectives 2 (access to services), 3 (education) and 4 (health) became more certain, and a number of previously negligible effects on SA objectives 3 (education), 6 (noise), 8 (historic environment), 9 (landscape), 11 (biodiversity), 12 (sustainable transport), 13 (environmental quality), 15 (flooding), 17 (waste) and 20 (encouraging inward investment) were now likely to be minor positive.

SA findings for the West End and A3052 site options

- 5.52 At this time, the SA work for the West End and A3052 Corridor site options that was previously presented in EDDC's SA Addendum (October 2012, see above) was revised in order to make it consistent with the SA work that had been undertaken previously by LUC in relation to other development site options in the District.
- 5.53 The reasonable alternative site options for the West End and A3052 Corridor that were identified by EDDC and subject to SA included nine sites at Cranbrook, four at Pinhoe, four at Blackhorse and a site at Exeter Airport (Exeter Business Park). The revised SA findings for those site options were described in the July 2013 SA Addendum.

Examination 2013-2015

- 5.54 East Devon District Council submitted its Local Plan to the Secretary of State for examination in August 2013. Initial examination hearings for the Local Plan took place in February and March 2014, following which the Inspector suspended the examination process and requested that the Council undertake some further evidence gathering, including the preparation of an up-to-date assessment of housing need.

Proposed Changes (February-April 2015)

- 5.55 The additional technical assessment work requested by the Inspector resulted in the Council identifying a number of options for potential policy changes to the Local Plan as submitted. Those options were subject to SA and the findings reported in an SA addendum that was used internally by EDDC, with the findings then helping to inform decisions regarding which options to take forward.

SA of Options for Proposed Changes (February 2015)

- 5.56 The additional options that the Council identified and which were subject to SA related to the following themes:
- The distribution strategy for the additional housing that was expected to be required.

site specific allocations are made, along with some other background information about the provision of services, infrastructure etc. to be incorporated into the overall development.

- The strategy for allocating housing development at the District's villages.
 - The provision of sites for Gypsies and Travellers.
- 5.57 The options for allocating housing development at the District's villages and for the provision of Gypsy and Traveller sites were not linked to the requirement for additional housing; rather they related to the overall approach taken in the Local Plan.
- 5.58 The Council was also considering changing the start date of the Local Plan to 2013 (to align with the Strategic Housing Market Assessment) and extending the end date to 2031 or 2033. This change could not be subject to SA in the same way as a policy option; however it was considered in terms of its implications for the timescales over which the potential effects of the Local Plan would occur.
- 5.59 The Council advised that any additional housing required due to the updated assessment of housing need would be allocated at sites that had already been through the SA process as part of the preparation of the Local Plan, but which were not currently included in the Plan as submitted. Therefore no additional development site options were identified or appraised at this time.
- 5.60 Four options for the distribution of additional housing were considered:
- Option A: Concentrate all or the vast majority of the additional housing provision at the West End with some potential scope for sites that whilst not 'at' the West End are physically very close to and well related to Exeter.
 - Option B: More evenly spread extra development across the West End and the rest of East Devon.
 - Option C: Concentrate the bulk of development in the rest of East Devon and not at the West End.
 - Option D: Not plan to meet additional housing requirements.
- 5.61 In general, the likely sustainability effects of locating all or most of the additional housing development at the West End (Option A) were found to be more positive than for the other options. This is because new jobs, services and facilities are proposed to be densely concentrated in that area (and already exist in adjacent Exeter City), and the co-location of jobs and homes should help to reduce journey distances (through providing scope for people to choose to live close to where they work) and increase the potential for using sustainable transport links.
- 5.62 Five options for the strategy for allocating housing development at the District's villages were considered:
- Option A: Retain settlement Built-up Area Boundaries (BUABs) in Strategy 27 and housing numbers.
 - Option B: Retain settlement BUABs in Strategy 27 but do not allocate housing.
 - Option C: Remove BUABs from all the settlements in Strategy 27 and have nil or limited rural development.
 - Option D: Assess the settlements in Strategy 27 using specified criteria establishing whether they should retain their BUAB.
 - Option E: Look to key villages to accommodate substantial levels of residential development.
- 5.63 The options for the distribution of development at the villages were considered likely to have a wide range of positive and negative effects, reflecting the relative advantages and disadvantages of focussing more development in rural or urban areas. Options D and E performed slightly better than the other options overall, as there were more positive effects associated with those options (although most were minor). While there were a number of likely significant positive effects identified for Option C, there were also some likely significant negative effects associated with that option.
- 5.64 Four options for the provision of sites for Gypsies and Travellers were identified by the Council:
- Option A: To not make land allocations.
 - Option B: Make provision on larger scale housing allocation sites.

- Option C: Make provision as part of smaller scale housing sites.
 - Option D: Allocate dedicated sites for Gypsies and Travellers.
- 5.65 In general, the likely sustainability effects of making provision for Gypsies and Travellers on larger scale housing allocations sites (Option B) were found to be more positive than for the other options. This is because larger-scale housing sites are more likely to incorporate services, facilities and public transport links, which Gypsy and Traveller residents would be able to make use of. The closer proximity of jobs, services and facilities may also mean that journeys are shorter and are more likely to be undertaken on foot or by bicycle.
- 5.66 As described above, the Council was also considering the option of changing the start date of the Local Plan from 2006 to 2013, and the end date from 2026 to 2031. While this would not affect the findings of the earlier SA work in terms of the nature of the likely effects that the Local Plan would have on the SA objectives, it was noted that the timescales over which those effects would be experienced would change in accordance with the revised plan period. The proposed revised start date for the Local Plan would bring it into line within the updated Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). This would ensure that the likely significant positive effects of the Local Plan that were identified in the 2012 SA Report in relation to SA objective 1: housing would still occur, as the housing provision made in the Local Plan would reflect the latest evidence regarding levels of need over the period during which the Plan would be implemented. In addition, any potential extension of the end date of the plan would spread its sustainability effects over a longer time period.
- 5.67 The SA findings for the options described above were set out in an SA Addendum and were taken into account by EDDC. This SA work, along with the completed evidence studies (in particular the updated Strategic Housing Market Assessment), informed the preparation of the Proposed Changes that were published for consultation by EDDC between May and June 2015.
- 5.68 With regards to the distribution of the additional housing, Option A was taken forward as this was considered by the Council to be the most sustainable option in terms of access to services, facilities and jobs, and opportunities to use sustainable transport modes. For the approach to allocating housing development at the district's villages, the Council took forward a hybrid of Options B and D which involved amending Strategy 27 to list the villages that were considered to be the most appropriate locations for housing development based on sustainability considerations and which should therefore retain their BUAB, but not allocating housing at those villages within the Local Plan. This approach leaves it open for Neighbourhood Plans to bring forward development in those locations. In relation to the options for Gypsy and Traveller sites, initially the Council took forward Option A which was not to allocate sites in the Local Plan. However, following discussions during the examination hearings after the consultation on the Proposed Changes (see below) a further change has now been proposed which involves allocating pitches for Travelling Showpeople as an extension to the existing site at Clyst St Mary.

SA Addendum for Proposed Changes (April 2015)

- 5.69 The draft Proposed Changes to the Local Plan were subject to SA by LUC in the form of a further SA Addendum, which described the implications of each proposed change for the earlier SA findings (i.e. those described in the October 2012 SA Report and updated through the July 2013 SA Addendum). The SA Addendum was published in April 2015 alongside the Proposed Changes during the consultation period.
- 5.70 Most of the Proposed Changes to the Local Plan involved amendments to policy wording, and in most cases the proposed wording amendments did not change the policy's meaning or its likely effects on the SA objectives. However, a number of changes to the SA findings were identified as a result of wording amendments, most of which made the likely effects identified previously more positive. Three previously significant negative effects (on SA objectives 11: biodiversity, 13: water quality and 6: noise were reduced to minor negative, and one new likely significant positive effect was introduced, in relation to SA objective 15: flood risk.
- 5.71 In addition to the changes to policy wording that were proposed, a small number of new policies were proposed and others deleted. Two new policies were introduced into the Local Plan through the Proposed Changes - Redevelopment of Redundant Offices Complex at Winslade Park, and Development at Uplyme. These policies were subject to SA and the findings described in the April 2015 SA Addendum.

5.72 The policies that were proposed to be deleted from the Local Plan in their entirety through the Proposed Changes were:

- Strategy 16 – Exeter Science Park
- Strategy 19 – Skypark Business Park
- Strategy 42 – Green Infrastructure Provision and Strategy
- D5 – Advertisements within Areas of Special Control of Advertisements and Advance Advertisement Signs
- EN11 – Demolition of Unlisted Buildings in Conservation Areas
- EN12 – Development Affecting Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest
- EN15 – Environmental Impacts, Nuisance and Detriment to Health
- EN20 – Private Sewage Treatment Works
- EN23 – Coastal erosion and surface water run-off
- EN24 – Coastal Defence Schemes
- H1 – Residential Land Allocation
- E1 – Provision of Employment Land
- E3 – Safeguarding Employment Land and Premises
- E8 – Agricultural Development and Succession Housing

5.73 As a result of the proposed deletion of the above policies, a number of potentially significant positive effects that were previously associated with those policies would no longer occur, particularly in relation to the social and economic objectives, but also in relation to some of the environmental objectives (Strategy 42). However, two potentially significant negative effects on the vitality and viability of towns in relation to Strategies 16 and 19 would be avoided.

5.74 In the case of policy E1, which previously set out allocations for employment land, most of the allocations previously made in that policy are still included in the Local Plan, but through the Proposed Changes were moved into the strategic policies for the relevant towns. Therefore, most of the effects associated with the employment site allocations would still occur.

5.75 Similarly, some of the residential site allocations previously set out in policy H1 were moved into the strategic policies for the towns; however most of the residential site allocations from policy H1 were removed from the Local Plan entirely because they now had planning permission and as such had been taken into account in the updated overall housing figures set out in Strategy 2: Scale and Distribution of Residential Development. Therefore, while the likely effects of those site allocations would no longer occur as a direct result of the Local Plan, the developments are still progressing separately to the Local Plan process and may still result in some of the sustainability effects identified.

Further Proposed Changes (August 2015)

5.76 Following further examination hearing sessions held in July 2015, EDDC proposed a number of further proposed changes to the Local Plan. These further proposed changes reflected the latest Government guidance in relation to wind energy developments and sought to reflect discussions during the hearing sessions and concerns raised by Natural England.

5.77 EDDC sought to identify reasonable alternative options for these further proposed changes; however in some cases the only alternative option identified was to not make changes to a policy (i.e. so that it would remain as it appeared in the submitted Local Plan, also taking into account the April 2015 proposed changes). The options considered in relation to each of the relevant policies are summarised below.

Strategy 10: Green Infrastructure in East Devon's West End

5.78 The options for changes to this policy were to either leave the policy as currently drafted or to supplement and strengthen the policy, seeking to more robustly ensure that mitigation (required to avoid adverse effect on European sites) will be delivered. Leaving the policy as it previously

stood would not address the concerns that have been raised by Natural England (a statutory consultee) and may not provide sufficient confidence that mitigation for the impacts of development at the West End on European sites will be delivered. Therefore, this option was not considered to be a reasonable alternative.

- 5.79 However, revising the policy as proposed under the second option would be more likely to ensure that the significant positive effect on SA objective 11: biodiversity that was previously identified in the SA would in fact occur. The approach in the second option should provide more certainty about the delivery of mitigation for the recreation-related impacts of population growth and therefore help to avoid significant effects on the integrity of European sites. The option could involve the inclusion of a map to identify land areas or sites for Suitable Accessible Natural Greenspace (SANGs) in East Devon's West End, which would provide additional certainty about the delivery of the mitigation sought by Natural England.
- 5.80 Therefore, the second option was taken forward by EDDC and reflected in the August 2015 Further Proposed Changes.

Strategy 22: Development at Exmouth (first set of options)

- 5.81 The first set of options for the strategic policy relating to development at Exmouth related to how the policy refers to schemes that are proposed in the Exmouth Masterplan. The three options identified were to either leave the policy wording as drafted (with only possible minor tweaks to the wording); to delete all or most references to the Exmouth Masterplan from the Local Plan; or to amend the policy to list the projects in the Masterplan that may come forward and that would be acceptable under the HRA as well as listing those that are unlikely to be acceptable.
- 5.82 Leaving the policy as it previously stood would not address the concerns that have been raised by Natural England, in particular its outstanding objection to some component parts of the Masterplan, and whether they would be able to be implemented without having likely significant effects on European sites. Therefore, this option was not considered to be a reasonable alternative.
- 5.83 The second option, to delete references to the Masterplan from the Local Plan, would help to avoid the likely significant effects identified in the HRA of the Masterplan (December 2011) relating to particular developments that were to be implemented through the Masterplan. Therefore, taking this option forward as part of the further proposed changes would reduce the potential for negative effects on SA objective 11: biodiversity. In addition, it was noted that the Council was currently undertaking further work in relation to the Exmouth Masterplan, which may result in it becoming a separate DPD or SPD and therefore it may be subject to further SA and HRA work.
- 5.84 The third option, to amend the policy to refer to which Masterplan projects would and would not be likely to be acceptable in relation to their impacts on European sites, would also help to avoid the likely significant effects identified in the HRA of the Masterplan (December 2011). Therefore, taking this option forward as part of the further proposed changes would again reduce the potential for negative effects on SA objective 11: biodiversity. However, the Council was concerned that this approach may result in the information in Strategy 22 about the projects becoming quickly out of date. Furthermore, there remained some degree of uncertainty about whether mitigation is needed or viable in respect of some projects and the form that any mitigation that might take. At this stage, given these uncertainties and the fact that other circumstances have changed, the Council considered it to be reasonable and prudent to defer relevant assessment to updated and new Masterplan work.
- 5.85 Therefore, the second option was taken forward by EDDC and reflected in the August 2015 Further Proposed Changes.

Strategy 22: Development at Exmouth (second set of options)

- 5.86 The second set of options for the strategic policy relating to development at Exmouth related to how the policy addresses the need for mitigation to avoid recreation-related impacts on European sites. The two options identified were either to leave the policy as currently drafted, or to strengthen the policy to be more explicit about the requirement for mitigation measures.
- 5.87 Leaving the policy as currently drafted would not address the concerns that have been raised by Natural England and may not provide sufficient confidence about the delivery of mitigation for the

impacts of development on European sites. Therefore, this option was not considered to be a reasonable alternative.

- 5.88 However, revising the policy as proposed under the second option would provide more certainty that mitigation could be achieved in relation to the potential negative effects of the policy on SA objective 11: biodiversity. A potential but uncertain minor negative effect on SA objective 11 was previously identified through the SA work, having been reduced from a potential significant negative effect as a result of the changes to the policy that were proposed in April 2015. The further proposed changes that would be made to the policy if this option were to be taken forward would help to provide more certainty about the delivery of mitigation for the recreation-related impacts of population growth and therefore help to avoid significant effects on the integrity of European sites and continue to reduce the previously significant negative effect on SA objective 11: biodiversity to minor negative.
- 5.89 Therefore, the second option was taken forward by EDDC and reflected in the August 2015 Further Proposed Changes.

Strategy 22: Development at Exmouth (third set of options)

- 5.90 The third and final set of options for the strategic policy relating to development at Exmouth related to how the policy refers to the Valley Parks. The three options identified were to either leave the wording of the policy largely as currently drafted (noting that the Plan recognises that the Valley Parks could be part of or contribute to SANGs provision); to revise the policy to clearly state that the Exmouth Valley Parks are to be SANGs; or to not see the Valley Parks as having a SANGs role or function.
- 5.91 The first option identified was to leave the policy largely as previously drafted, noting that the Plan recognises that the Valley Parks could be part of or contribute to SANGs provision. The Valley Parks could also be more explicitly identified as being part of the SANGs provision for Exmouth with clearer reference to funding and actions to actively promote the Parks to fulfil their SANGs function. This approach would provide more certainty that mitigation could be achieved in relation to the potential negative effects of the policy on SA objective 11: biodiversity. As described above, a potential but uncertain minor negative effect on SA objective 11 was previously identified through the SA work, having been reduced from a potential significant negative effect as a result of the changes to the policy that were proposed in April 2015. The further proposed changes that would be made to the policy if this option were to be taken forward would help to provide more certainty about the delivery of mitigation for the recreation-related impacts of population growth and therefore help to avoid significant effects on the integrity of European sites and continue to reduce the previously significant negative effect on SA objective 11: biodiversity to minor negative.
- 5.92 The second option would also go further than the first option in terms of helping to avoid significant effects on SA objective 11: biodiversity; however while the approach is considered by the Council to be technically feasible, it would fail to recognise the broader benefits of the Parks as multi-functional green space and therefore more land might be required to make other green space provision.
- 5.93 The third option would provide less certainty about the delivery of mitigation for recreation-related impacts on European sites as it removes the possibility of SANGs being provided at the Valley Parks, meaning that SANGs delivery elsewhere would be needed. Therefore, this option would mean that the previously identified significant negative effect on SA objective 11: biodiversity may still occur.
- 5.94 Therefore, the first option was taken forward by EDDC and reflected in the August 2015 Further Proposed Changes.

Strategy 47: Nature Conservation and Geology

- 5.95 The two alternative options identified by EDDC in relation to this policy were to either leave the plan as currently drafted or to amend the policy to make it more robust, formally requiring mitigation for impacts on European sites to be considered as part of the determination of a planning application.
- 5.96 Leaving the policy as it was currently drafted would not address the concerns that have been raised by Natural England and may not provide sufficient confidence about the delivery of

mitigation for the impacts of development at the West End on European sites. Therefore, this option was not considered to be a reasonable alternative.

5.97 However, revising the policy as proposed under the second option would help to ensure that the significant positive effect on SA objective 11: biodiversity that was previously identified would occur.

5.98 Therefore, the second option was taken forward by EDDC and reflected in the August 2015 Further Proposed Changes.

6 How will the environmental and sustainability effects of the Local Plan be monitored?

- 6.1 The SEA Regulations require that "*The responsible authority shall monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of each plan or programme with the purpose of identifying unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage and being able to undertake appropriate remedial action*" (Regulation 17), and that the environmental report should provide information on "*a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring*" (Schedule 2).
- 6.2 The Government's latest SA Guidance in the National Planning Practice Guidance⁵ states that details of the proposals for monitoring the significant effects of implementing the adopted local plan should be included in the Sustainability Appraisal report, or the post-adoption statement (i.e. this document).
- 6.3 A number of the strategic and development management policies in the Local Plan and the associated site allocations could have potential significant effects (both positive and negative) on the SA objectives. At least one potential significant effect was identified in relation to all of the SA objectives in the SA framework. Therefore, it is recommended that monitoring is undertaken to determine whether these effects do indeed occur due to implementation of the Local Plan, and in order to seek to remedy or reverse them.
- 6.4 The August 2015 SA Report included a proposed monitoring framework for monitoring the likely significant effects of the Local Plan (Table 7.1 in the SA Report). This presented proposed monitoring indicators in relation to each SA objective. Note that the indicators proposed were included as suggestions, and reflect the indicators proposed within the monitoring framework for the Local Plan itself as the data collected will also be relevant to understanding sustainability effects in many instances.

Table 6.1: Proposed monitoring indicators for monitoring the effects of the East Devon Local Plan on the SA objectives

SA objectives for which potential significant effects have been identified	Suggested indicators
1. To ensure everybody has the opportunity to live in a decent home.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of new homes built annually within the District. Percentage of all new homes delivered in the District that are affordable.
2. To ensure that all groups of the population have access to community services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amount of residential completions within 30 minutes public transport time of a GP, a hospital, a primary school, a secondary school, an employment centre and a major health centre.
3. To provide for education, skills and lifelong learning to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> meet the needs of the local population, and meet local employment needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of new work-based apprenticeships offered in the District annually. Number of new school places created in the District annually.
4. To improve the population's health.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average life expectancy in the District.
5. To reduce crime and fear of crime.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of crimes reported annually in the District.
6. To reduce noise levels and minimise exposure of people to unacceptable levels of noise pollution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of noise pollution incidents reports annually.

⁵ <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal/sustainability-appraisal-requirements-for-local-plans/>

SA objectives for which potential significant effects have been identified	Suggested indicators
7. To maintain and improve cultural, social and leisure provision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of eligible open spaces managed to green flag award standard.
8. To maintain and enhance built and historic assets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of heritage assets within the District on the 'Heritage at Risk Register'.
9. To promote the conservation and wise use of land and protect and enhance the landscape character of East Devon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of new development taking place on brownfield land.
10. To maintain the local amenity, quality and character of the local environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of complaints made to EDDC regarding noise pollution.
11. To conserve and enhance the biodiversity of East Devon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change in areas and populations of biodiversity importance, including (i) change in priority habitats and species (by type); and (ii) change in areas designated for their intrinsic environmental value including sites of international, national, regional, sub-regional significance (changes arising from development, management and planning agreements, in hectares and numbers of priority species type).
12. To promote and encourage non-car based modes of transport and reduce journey lengths.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequency of bus services in the District's villages.
13. To maintain and enhance the environment in terms of air, soil and water quality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of declared Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in the District.
14. To contribute towards a reduction in local emissions of greenhouse gases.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renewable energy capacity installed by type.
15. To ensure that there is no increase in the risk of flooding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of planning permissions granted contrary to the advice of the Environment Agency on either flood defence grounds or water quality.
16. To ensure energy consumption is as efficient as possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Renewable energy capacity installed by type.
17. To promote wise use of waste resources whilst reducing waste production and disposal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volume of waste generated in the District annually. Percentage of waste generated in the District that is recycled.
18. To maintain sustainable growth of employment for East Devon, to match levels of jobs with the economically active workforce.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amount of land (defined by completed SqM gross floorspace) developed for employment by type. Amount of employment land lost to residential development
19. To maintain and enhance the vitality and viability of the Towns of East Devon.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amount of completed retail development in town centres.
20. To encourage and accommodate both indigenous and inward investment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amount of land (defined by completed SqM gross floorspace) developed for employment by type.

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