Mole Valley Local Development Framework

Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Core Strategy

Sustainability Appraisal Report

MoleValley
District Council

MOLE VALLEY LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

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1. SUMMARY AND OUTCOMES

1.1 Non-technical summary

<u>Background</u>

1.1.1 A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is the process of examining the different policy options for the Mole Valley Local Development Framework and considering whether there are any improvements that can be made to better support the Government's principles for sustainable development. These are:

- living within environmental limits; and
- ensuring a strong, healthy and just society,

which will be realised by:

- achieving a sustainable economy;
- promoting good governance; and
- using sound science responsibly.

1.1.2 The starting point of the appraisal process was to examine baseline information on the quality of life in Mole Valley and to identify key sustainability issues and problems. The next stage was to develop sustainability objectives and indicators, against which emerging policies are measured to establish how they might contribute to sustainable development. The objectives and indicators have been refined through consultation and the baseline data updated where necessary throughout the process.

1.1.3 The Sustainability Appraisal has helped to identify the most sustainable policy options and enable amendments to be made to them to make them more sustainable. The sustainability objectives and indicators will be used to measure the success of policies once they are in place.

1.1.4 The aim of the Core Strategy is to develop a policy framework through which the Council can achieve its spatial vision of how the community would like the District to be in 20 years' time. The vision, which is based upon that of the Community Plan, is:

> ***Mole Valley will make provision for its share of the Region's growth of homes and jobs and provide for the needs of its communities but in a way that is sustainable, minimises significant harmful change to its distinctive character, environment and feel, and mitigates its impact on the causes of climate change. The District's natural, built and historic environment will be safeguarded and enhanced and communities will have safe, convenient and sustainable access to the services and facilities they require.***

1.1.5 This is then expanded on to provide further detail and can be read in full in the Core Strategy, Chapter 4. Please note that this Vision has been refined since the publication of the original Sustainability Appraisal Report in 2006.

1.1.6 In order to achieve the vision for the Core Strategy, the following goals were established:

- To safeguard and enhance the highly attractive natural environment
- To provide homes to suit all needs and means

- To improve transport and accessibility
- To maintain and improve the built environment
- To ensure the provision of adequate infrastructure, services and community facilities to meet current and future requirements
- To ensure safer and stronger communities
- To maintain a successful local economy
- To ensure successful town and local centres, and
- To use natural resources wisely.

1.1.7 In turn, each goal will be reached by achieving a number of more specific strategic objectives expressed through a range of Core Strategy policies.

1.1.8 Please note: The following sections relate to the Core Strategy: Preferred Options consulted upon in 2006. Since then there have been further iterations of the Core Strategy and the goals and objectives have been refined. This has not fundamentally changed the outcome of this sustainability appraisal work. Please see the covering 'Explanatory Note' for further information.

Core Strategy: Preferred Options, May 2006

1.1.9 The Core Strategy: Preferred Options report sets out the Council's preferred way of meeting the spatial objectives, and therefore achieving the goals and realising the vision. The Preferred Options have been developed through public consultation on the Issues and Options published in December 2005 and Sustainability Appraisal, and are summarised below:

A – Natural environment

- Ensure that new building is on previously developed land within existing built-up areas wherever possible to safeguard the natural environment.
- Safeguard high quality landscapes of designated national importance.
- Safeguard designated sites and areas of natural, ecological and historic importance.
- Seek to improve landscape quality in the countryside and on the edge of built-up areas.
- Encourage rural biodiversity (variety of all forms of life).

B – Housing

- An average of 171 new homes per year 2006 – 2026 would be built to meet Mole Valley's housing requirements set out in the emerging South East Plan. (*nb: This has subsequently been increased to 188 homes per year, this not deemed to be significant and therefore does not require a full review of the outcome of the sustainability appraisal*)
- New homes would be constructed within Mole Valley's existing built-up areas. Some new houses could be built through mixed use redevelopment of employment sites.
- If there is not enough land in the built-up areas to meet the housing requirements of the South East Plan, for example, if Mole Valley's housing requirement is increased significantly above the current figure of 171 dwellings per year, then suitable sustainable sites on the edge of the main built-up areas would be identified. The reserve housing sites identified in the Mole Valley Local Plan would be re-assessed as part of this process.

- Provision would be made for affordable housing with regard to the Mole Valley Housing Needs Study and the overall regional target in the emerging South East Plan that 25% of all new housing should be social rented accommodation and 10% other forms of affordable housing.
- Provision would be made for rural housing on small-scale sites within or well related to villages where studies show it is needed.
- Provision would be made to meet specific accommodation needs, including those of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Show People.
- New housing would be balanced to ensure an appropriate mix of size, type and tenure.

C – Transport and accessibility

- Manage travel demand by only allowing larger new development schemes where they are easy to reach by public transport or where there are arrangements to reduce travel by car, for example restricting car parking, encouraging car sharing, providing bus links etc.
- Many measures to improve travel choices, reduce the demand to travel by car and tackle congestion are set out in the Local Transport Plan (produced by Surrey County Council, which is the Highway Authority) and in the Community Plan (produced by the District and County Council and other public, private and voluntary sector partners on the Local Strategic Partnership).

D – Built environment

- Ensure a high standard of design and make sure new development fits in well with its surroundings.
- Safeguard and enhance the District's built and cultural heritage and the historic environment (Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Historic Parks and Gardens etc).
- Safeguard and enhance public open spaces in the built-up areas.
- Encourage urban biodiversity (variety of all forms of life) through development schemes and public open space improvements.

E – Infrastructure

- Require developers to contribute towards the overall cost of providing infrastructure, services and community facilities each time a house or commercial site is developed.
- Safeguard against the loss of local shops, post offices and other facilities to other uses, particularly in the rural villages where the community relies upon them.
- Safeguard existing community, sport and recreation facilities and provide additional facilities where there is a need.

F – Safer and stronger communities

- Minimise the numbers at risk from flooding and other effects of climate change.
- Minimise the numbers at risk from environmental pollution.
- Address improvements to quality of life for particular communities through Area Action Plans where appropriate.
- The Community Safety Strategy (produced by the District and County Councils, the Police, Fire and Rescue Service and Primary Care Trust

which make up the Community Safety Partnership) seeks to reduce crime and minimise the fear of crime.

G – Local economy

- Safeguard the most suitably located employment sites and make provision for the needs of local businesses through ensuring the provision of a range of employment sites.
- Make provision for mixed use redevelopment of some employment sites, which may provide more opportunities to build new homes and affordable homes.
- Support rural diversification (farmers diversifying the range of activities on their land in order to sustain an income from it).
- Support the contribution that tourism makes to the local economy.

H – Town and local centres

- Ensure the vitality of town and local centres, including by resisting any further loss of retail shops within them.
- Address change through Town Centre Action Plans where appropriate.

I – Land and natural resources

- Make the best use of previously developed land.
- Promote energy and water efficiency and renewable energy through the design of new development.
- Promote waste minimisation and recycling.

1.2   Statement of the likely significant effects of the Core Strategy

1.2.1   The Issues and Options in November 2005, Preferred Options in March 2006 and Further Issues & Options in February 2008 have been considered against the sustainability objectives for Mole Valley by officers from East Surrey local planning authorities overseen by an independent consultant. The main likely significant beneficial effects of the Core Strategy are summarised below under the Sustainability Objective headings:

SA Objective 1 – To provide sufficient housing to enable people to live in a home suitable to their needs and which they can afford

The Core Strategy aims to meet Mole Valley's housing requirement, set by the emerging South East Plan. The requirement set out in the submitted South East Plan is 171 dwellings per year to 2026. Based on the findings of the Surrey Housing Potential Study 2005[1], the housing requirement can be met by using previously developed land in the built-up areas, which accords with SA Objective 7, to make the best use of previously developed land and existing buildings. However, should the housing requirement increase, the Core Strategy Preferred Options recognise that it may be necessary to identify additional sites on the edge of the main built-up areas, which will include a review of the reserve housing sites identified in the Mole Valley Local Plan[2].

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[1] Study carried out jointly by Surrey County Council and the Districts and Boroughs as a technical assessment of potential to inform the district distribution of housing requirement for Surrey in the South East Plan, July 2005.
[2] Mole Valley Local Plan 2000, the policies of which have been saved for the time-being as part of its successor, the Mole Valley Local Development Framework.

Please note that since the publication of this report in 2006 the housing target for Mole Valley has been increased to 188 dwellings per year and the Council is now required to identify sites with housing potential through undertaking a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. The conclusion of this work is that there may be a need to identify land for development on the edge of the main built-up areas through the Land Allocations DPD.

The Core Strategy Preferred Options sets out that policies will be put in place to ensure the provision of as much affordable housing as possible, part of the solution to the problem of high house prices relative to income. In addition provision will made for accommodation to meet specific needs, including those of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Show People.

SA Objective 7 – To make the best use of previously developed land and existing buildings.

The Core Strategy is centred on making the best use of previously developed land to reduce the likelihood of needing to use greenfield sites for development. Greenfield land will only be released if this proves necessary to meet any significant increase in Mole Valley's housing requirement in the South East Plan as it progresses towards adoption. If this does happen, then mitigation measures will need to be in place to ensure that the benefits of providing more homes can be achieved without harming other objectives.

SA Objective 13 – To conserve and enhance biodiversity within the plan area.

The high intrinsic environmental quality of Mole Valley is one of the main strengths of the District. In the surveys and workshops carried out during the preparation of the Core Strategy, local people said that what they liked most about living in, working in or visiting Mole Valley is the high quality environment, particularly the attractiveness of the countryside. New development will be built on previously developed land in the built-up areas, close to existing jobs, shops, services and community facilities in order to protect attractive countryside and important natural habitats. However, should greenfield sites be required to meet the housing requirements of the South East Plan, any harm to biodiversity will be minimised by safeguarding important ecological sites, and any opportunities to improve habitats will be realised as part of development schemes. Existing open space in the built-up areas also makes a significant contribution to biodiversity and the most important open spaces will be protected from development.

SA Objective 14 – To protect and enhance the natural, archaeological and historic environments and cultural assets.

The Core Strategy Preferred Options set out that development control policies will be developed to ensure a high standard of design and good integration with the existing built environment. Additional policies will protect historic buildings and areas of natural, archaeological and historic interest throughout Mole Valley. Dorking and Leatherhead town centres contain many historic buildings and parts are within Conservation Areas. This means that accommodating new, higher density development will pose a particular design challenge if the historic environment is to be protected and enhanced.

SA Objective 19 – Make land available to meet the needs of the economy.

The Core Strategy Preferred Options aim to make provision for the mixed use redevelopment of some employment sites to facilitate new housing

development, but also to safeguard the most suitably located sites employment sites and maintain a range of sites to meet the needs of local businesses. Evidence shows that there is some spare capacity in employment land within the built-up areas and that mixed use redevelopment may not result in a net loss of jobs, and may provide good opportunities to provide new homes and affordable homes.

Some effects of the Core Strategy are uncertain. Solutions are required to ensure that benefits are achieved without harming other objectives.

Please note that since publication of this report in 2006 the policy regarding employment land has been revised. This provides greater protection to employment land but still allows for some flexibility.

SA Objective 15 – To reduce road congestion and the need to travel.

Making the best use of previously developed land (SA Objective 7) and improving accessibility to all services and facilities (SA Objective 6) will mean locating much new development in the town centres of Dorking and Leatherhead. Car ownership levels in Mole Valley are high, and two out of three Mole Valley residents travel to work by car. Therefore, in order to reduce road congestion and the need to travel (SA Objective 15) there will need to be further investment in public transport and other alternatives to the car, such as making walking and cycling safer and more convenient. The Core Strategy Preferred Options aim to manage travel demand by only allowing significant new development schemes of all types where they are accessible by public transport or where there are arrangements to reduce travel by car. This may help to improve the viability of existing public transport services and promote interest in other ways of reducing car travel, for example by car sharing or reducing car parking.

1.2.3   Some effects are likely to be adverse and will require mitigation to ensure that benefits can be achieved without harming other objectives.

SA Objective 12 – To maintain and improve the water quality of the rivers and groundwater.

Ensuring that water quality is maintained and improved, while accommodating new housing and economic development is a key challenge identified in the submitted South East Plan. The Council will need to work closely with the water authorities to ensure that water infrastructure can keep pace with development.

1.3   Statement of the difference the process has made

1.3.1   The process of Sustainability Appraisal has helped in the development and refinement of the Preferred Options. A systematic and iterative process has been used to assess emerging objectives and options, which has enabled:
- the selection of the most sustainable options;
- the revision of some options to make them more sustainable, and
- the identification of the need to consider mitigation to address effects and achieve more sustainable outcomes.

1.3.2   This iterative process has then continued through the preparation of the subsequent revisions to the Core Strategy, the 'Further Issues and Options' and the 'Revised Preferred Options' and further sustainability appraisal has been undertaken where required (please see 'Explanatory Note').

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Purpose of the Sustainability Appraisal and the SA Report

2.1.1 The purpose of a sustainability appraisal (SA) is to promote sustainable development through better integration of environmental, social and economic considerations into plans.

2.1.2 'Sustainable development' is a term that has been commonly used since the Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The aim of sustainable development is to balance economic progress with social and environmental needs, without taking resources that future generations may need to survive. The UK Government has identified the following two overarching principles for sustainable development[3]:

- living within environmental limits; and
- ensuring a strong, healthy and just society,

which will be realised by:

- achieving a sustainable economy;
- promoting good governance; and
- using sound science responsibly.

2.1.3 Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, a sustainability appraisal of all of the documents that will form part of the Local Development Framework must be undertaken, with the exception of a few documents that do not have direct land use implications[4]. The Act recognises that land use planning is one of the means through which sustainable development can be achieved.

2.1.4 The purpose of this Sustainability Appraisal Report (SAR) is to identify the likely significant effects of the Core Strategy and the extent to which its implementation will achieve environmental, social and economic objectives. It shows how emerging policy options have been appraised by comparing them against sustainability criteria and providing information on their likely predicted effects. Through the sustainability appraisal process it is possible to explore ways of integrating sometimes competing objectives and achieving them together rather than trading one off against another.

2.2 Plan objectives and outline of contents

2.2.1 The aim of the Core Strategy is to develop a policy framework through which the Council can achieve its spatial vision of how the community would like the District to be in 20 years' time. The vision for the Core Strategy: Preferred Options (2006), which was shared with that of the Community Plan, is:

> **The needs of all those who live and work in the District are met, the environment, prosperity and distinctive character of Mole**

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[3] Securing the Future - UK Sustainable Development Strategy (March 2005)

[4] the Local Development Scheme (LDS, which sets out the timetable for preparing other documents); the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI, which sets out how and when people will be involved in their preparation); and the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR); Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks - Consultation Paper (ODPM, September 2004)

Valley are sustained, and problems which reduce the quality of life are tackled.

Please note, since the publication of this report in 2006, the Vision has been expanded upon to provide greater detail as part of the ongoing work on the Core Strategy, but the direction and main principles remain the same. It reads as follows:

Mole Valley will make provision for its share of the Region's growth of homes and jobs and provide for the needs of its communities but in a way that is sustainable, minimises significant harmful change to its distinctive character, environment and feel, and mitigates its impact on the causes of climate change. The District's natural, built and historic environment will be safeguarded and enhanced and communities will have safe, convenient and sustainable access to the services and facilities they require.

2.2.2   The Core Strategy will set out the broad, strategic direction that planning policies for Mole Valley will take over the next 20 years. It will include policies that will be the foundation for all other more detailed policies and guidance documents that will be prepared as part of the Local Development Framework.

2.2.3   In order to achieve the vision for the Core Strategy, the following goals were established:

- To safeguard and enhance the highly attractive natural environment
- To provide homes to suit all needs and means
- To improve transport and accessibility
- To maintain and improve the built environment
- To ensure the provision of adequate infrastructure, services and community facilities to meet current and future requirements
- To ensure safer and stronger communities
- To maintain a successful local economy
- To ensure successful town and local centres, and
- To use natural resources wisely.

2.2.4   In turn, each goal will be reached by achieving a number of more specific objectives:

- A. To safeguard and enhance the highly attractive natural environment

    1. To protect the openness of the Green Belt and not to make any changes to its boundaries unless necessary to meet the requirements of the South East Plan.
    2. To protect the countryside from inappropriate development and to maintain its open rural character.
    3. To protect and where possible enhance designated areas of high landscape and ecological importance.
    4. To encourage the sensitive management of the countryside, particularly areas of the urban fringe.
    5. To enhance rural biodiversity, including through the creation of new habitats when development takes place.

- B. To provide homes to suit all needs and means

6. To ensure the provision of sufficient land to meet the District's housing requirements contained in the surrey Structure Plan and emerging South East Plan.
7. To ensure the provision of a suitable mix of tenure, type and size of housing to contribute towards meeting the housing needs of all sections of the community, including the provision of affordable housing for urban and rural communities and specific needs such as those of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Show People.

- C. To improve transport and accessibility

8. To ensure that congestion is tackled, to limit delays through effective parking and travel management.
9. To reduce the demand to travel by car and increase accessibility to key services and facilities.
10. To improve road safety and security.

- D. To maintain and improve the built environment

11. To safeguard and enhance the distinctive character of the built environment by encouraging a high standard of design of new development and good integration with the existing built environment.
12. To safeguard and enhance the District's built and cultural heritage and the historic environment.
13. To safeguard and where possible enhance public open spaces in the built-up areas for their amenity value.
14. To enhance urban biodiversity, including through the creation of new habitats when new development takes place.

- E. To ensure the provision of adequate infrastructure, services and community facilities to meet current and future requirements

15. To ensure adequate and timely provision of infrastructure and services to accompany new development and to ensure that existing deficiencies in provision are addressed.
16. To safeguard and ensure provision of sufficient land and facilities for open space, recreation, service and community facilities to meet the needs of the community, and particularly those of young people.

- F. To ensure safer and stronger communities

17. To minimise crime and the fear of crime.
18. To minimise the numbers of those at risk of flooding and other impacts of climate change, including hotter summers, drought and severe weather events.
19. To minimise the numbers of those at risk of contaminated land and environmental pollution.
20. To address problems that reduce the quality of life for particular communities. This will include problems identified through community-led planning initiatives such as Parish Plans and Market Towns Initiative Healthchecks.

- G. To maintain a successful local economy

21. To provide for the needs of local businesses, including through the retention of suitably located employment land.
22. To support rural diversification.

23. To provide for visitors as important contributors to the local economy.

- H. To ensure successful town and local centres, and

24. To ensure the vitality and viability of Dorking and Leatherhead town centres.
25. To ensure successful local centres at Bookham, Fetcham and Ashtead.

- I. To use natural resources wisely.

26. To make the best use of previously developed land.
27. To encourage sustainable construction methods and buildings (use of local and recycled materials, energy and water efficiency) and renewable energy to reduce energy consumption and therefore greenhouse gas emissions.
28. To promote waste minimisation and recycling.

2.2.5   The Preferred Options for the Core Strategy to achieve the objectives, goals and spatial vision set out above are set out in the Non-Technical Summary.

Please note: These goals and objectives have since been modified and refined as a result of the ongoing work and can be viewed in Chapter 2, 6 and 7 of the Core Strategy; however, the overall principles remain the same.

2.3   Compliance with the SEA Directive / Regulations

2.3.1   International commitment to achieving sustainable development has led to it being incorporated into international and national laws and guidance. The European Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive[5] requires those plans and programmes which are likely to have a significant effect on the environment to be subject to Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The aim of the SEA is to provide a high level of protection of the environment and to ensure that environmental considerations are integrated into the preparation of policies, plans and programmes.

2.3.2   In the UK land use plan-making system, the requirements of the European SEA Directive have been incorporated into the wider process of Sustainability Appraisal, which extends SEA to include the consideration of social and economic issues as well as environmental concerns. The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004[6] require the identification, description and evaluation of likely significant environmental effects and the consideration of reasonable alternatives to comply with the European SEA Directive.

2.3.3   To ensure that the requirements of the SEA Directive are clearly identified as part of this Sustainability Appraisal Report, a text box is used to highlight the relevant information:

> **Compliance with the SEA Directive**
>
> For ease of reference, a text box is used to identify the relevant information in this Sustainability Appraisal Report that fulfils the requirements of the SEA Directive.

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[5] Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment
[6] Statutory Instrument 2004 No. 1633

3.   APPRAISAL METHODOLOGY

3.1   Approach to the Sustainability Appraisal

3.1.1   The appraisal process and methodology used in this Sustainability Appraisal is based on the approach set out in Government guidance[7], which identifies a series of Sustainability Appraisal stages and tasks (see Figure 1 below).

> The methodology used has also been carried out to meet the requirements of the European SEA Directive as set out in the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

Table 1: Sustainability Appraisal stages and tasks

Core Strategy Stage 1: Pre-production – Evidence Gathering
SA stages and tasks
Stage A: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope
A1: Identifying other relevant policies, plans and programmes, and sustainability objectives   **A2:** Collecting baseline information   **A3:** Identifying sustainability issues and problems   **A4:** Developing the SA framework   **A5:** Consulting on the scope of the SA
Core Strategy Stage 2: Production
SA stages and tasks
Stage B: Developing and refining options and assessing effects
B1: Testing the Core Strategy objectives against the SA framework   **B2:** Developing the Core Strategy options   **B3:** Predicting the effects of the Core Strategy   **B4:** Evaluating the effects of the Core Strategy   **B5:** Considering ways of mitigating adverse effects and maximising beneficial effects   **B6:** Proposing measures to monitor the significant effects of implementing the Core Strategy
Stage C: Preparing the SA Report
C1: Preparing the SA Report
Stage D: Consulting on the Core Strategy Preferred Options and SA Report
D1: Public participation on the Core Strategy Preferred Options and the SA Report   **D2(i)** Appraising significant changes
Core Strategy Stage 3: Examination
SA stages and tasks
D2(ii) Appraising significant changes resulting from representations
Core Strategy Stage 4: Adoption and Monitoring
SA stages and tasks
D3: Making decisions and providing information
Stage E: - Monitoring the significant effects of implementing the Core Strategy

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[7] Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents, ODPM, November 2005

> - **E1:** Finalising aims and methods for monitoring
> - **E2:** Responding to adverse effects

3.1.2   This Sustainability Appraisal Report represents the completion of Stage D1 of the process (see Figure 1 above). Due to the need to carry out further work on the Core Strategy after the preparation of the Preferred Options document in May 2006, it has been necessary to undertake further sustainability appraisal work, Stage D2(i) of the process set out above. The outcomes of this work are in Appendices 10 and 11 of this report.

3.2   When the Sustainability Appraisal was carried out and by whom

3.2.1   The process of undertaking a sustainability appraisal started at the outset of the preparation of the Core Strategy (see Figure 1 above). Much of the initial scoping work (SA Stages A1 to A4) was carried out jointly with Surrey County Council and other participants in the East Surrey LDF group, involving the SEA statutory consultation bodies[8]. Joint working had a number of advantages at this stage, including consideration of sustainability issues beyond administrative boundaries, efficient use of resources and the development of common elements of the SA framework, such as objectives, indicators and methodology. The tasks in Stage A were carried out as an iterative rather than a sequential process, enabling constant updating and improvement.

3.2.2   The appraisal of the Core Strategy Issues and Options in November 2005 and Preferred Options in March 2006 (SA Stage B) was carried out through a 'peer review' process. This involved officers from at least two other local planning authorities in the East Surrey LDF group (Elmbridge, Epsom and Ewell, Mole Valley, Reigate and Banstead and Tandridge), in addition to Mole Valley officers, appraising the options, overseen by an independent consultant. The 'peer review' process was designed to ensure that the assessment remained independent from policy formulation. The consultant provided an objective input to the assessment, ensured that a consistent approach was taken, and enabled verification of the process.

3.2.3   Further details of the methodology used for the appraisal of the Issues and Options and Preferred Options are set out in appendices 7 and 8. The key issues arising from the appraisal are detailed at section 5 of this report. The appraisal process has involved testing options against SA objectives. Indicators have also been identified for each of the SA objectives. By identifying the most important aspects of each SA objective as a focus, indicators have enabled consistent and more objective judgements to be made about likely significant impacts. The baseline information has also helped to determine the likely effects, their significance and magnitude.

3.3   Who was consulted, when and how

> ### Compliance with the SEA Directive
>
> The Environmental Report should provide information on how authorities that are likely to be concerned by the environmental effects of implementing the Core Strategy have been consulted when deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information to be included in the report (SEA Directive, Article 5.4).

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[8] The Countryside Agency (now Natural England), English Heritage, English Nature (now Natural England) and the Environment Agency.

3.3.1   Consultation on the Core Strategy SA/SEA Scoping Report (Stage A5 of the process) was carried out in July and August 2005 for a period of five weeks, as required by the Regulations[9].

3.3.2   The Scoping Report was sent to the four SEA statutory consultation bodies[10], which are the Countryside Agency (now Natural England), English Heritage, English Nature (now Natural England) and the Environment Agency. The Council also consulted more widely with other organisations that have social, environmental, or economic responsibilities and are likely to be concerned by the effects of implementing the Local Development Framework. These included the LDF specific consultation bodies[11], and other relevant organisations with a sustainability focus or interest. The Scoping Report was made, and remains, publicly available on the Council's website at www.molevalley.gov.uk/ldf (please see SA/SEA pages).

3.3.3   Appendix 3 lists the organisations that were consulted about the Scoping Report. This main SA Report was sent to the same bodies. It was also published on the Council's website and public inspection copies were deposited at the Council Offices in Dorking and at the Help Shop in Leatherhead. The additional work on the Sustainability Appraisal undertaken after this stage was sent to the Statutory Consultation Bodies and placed on the Council's website.

3.3.4   The Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI, adopted 18th May 2006) sets out the processes for preparing Local Development Documents, incorporating the consultation requirements of SA/SEA. It identifies the opportunities for involvement in the preparation of the Scoping Report and the Sustainability Appraisal Report and how consultation is to be carried out at different stages. The provisions of the SCI and the underlying Regulations have been followed in carrying out sustainability appraisal on the development of the Core Strategy.

3.3.5   An important element of the SCI is feedback. Appendix 4 documents the responses received on the Scoping Report and the action taken by the Council on the points raised. Appendix 9 sets out the responses received on this SA Report and the Council's response / actions taken and Appendix 10 contains the response received on the Further Issues and Options consultation.

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[9] Regulation 12 (6) of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

[10] Regulation 4 of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

[11] The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004

4.   SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVES, BASELINE AND CONTEXT

4.1   Links to other policies, plans, programmes and sustainability objectives

> **Compliance with the SEA Directive**
>
> The Environmental Report should provide information on the relationship of the plan with other plans and programmes (SEA Directive, Article 5 and Annex I (a)). It should set out how the environmental protection strategies established at international, European Community or national level that are relevant to the plan have been taken into account during its preparation (Annex I (e)).

4.1.1   The Government's Sustainability Appraisal guidance[12] requires that a review of other relevant policies, plans, and programmes and their sustainability objectives is carried out to ascertain their relevance in influencing the preparation of both Local Development Framework (LDF) policies, and the Sustainability Appraisal framework for assessing the effects of those policies (Stage A1 of the process)

4.1.2   The Local Development Framework, of which the Core Strategy is the central document, is being prepared particularly within the context of Government planning policy and guidance, the Regional Spatial Strategy, and other relevant regional, county and local strategies. It will also reflect local needs and requirements, for example, those identified as a result of preparing and reviewing the Mole Valley Community Plan (Community Strategy).

4.1.3   However, a wider range of policies, plans and programmes at international, national, regional, county and local level will also have a bearing on the formulation of LDF policies and on the Sustainability Appraisal framework for assessing them. These have been identified and reviewed through joint working with other Surrey local planning authorities, particularly those in East Surrey (Elmbridge, Epsom and Ewell, Mole Valley, Reigate and Banstead and Tandridge), and including Surrey County Council and other Surrey authorities (notably Guildford, Spelthorne and Woking) as well as statutory SEA bodies at a workshop facilitated by Surrey County Council.

4.1.4   The Scoping Report published in July 2005 identified the policies, plans, and programmes that had been reviewed at that time. Summaries of their relevance for the LDF and its Sustainability Appraisal, in terms of key objectives, key targets and indicators and implications, were set out as part of the Scoping Report.

4.1.5   Since then, the key requirements of additional, often new or updated, plans and programmes of relevance to the Core Strategy have been taken into account as part of an ongoing process. Some of these were suggested as a result of consultation on the Scoping Report, which helped to identify gaps. Appendix 1 to this report therefore sets out the requirements of plans, policies and programmes that have been taken into account in the preparation of the Core Strategy, in particular they have influenced the development of the sustainability objectives and indicators set out below (section 4.4).

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[12] Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks (ODPM, 2005)

4.2   Description of the social, environmental and economic baseline characteristics and the predicted future baseline

> **Compliance with the SEA Directive**
>
> The Environmental Report should provide information on 'the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme' and 'the environmental characteristics of the areas likely to be significantly affected (SEA Directive, Article 5 and Annex I (b) and (c)).

4.2.1   The Government's Sustainability Appraisal guidance widens the European SEA Directive's requirements concerning the District's environmental characteristics to the collection of relevant social and economic as well as environmental baseline information, to give a 'snapshot' of the quality of life in Mole Valley (Stage A2 of the process)

4.2.2   Baseline information provides the starting point for monitoring trends of social, economic and environmental effects and impacts on the District. Sufficient data must be collected about the current state of the District to allow the Local Development Framework's effects and impacts to be assessed. These may include cumulative or cross-cutting effects over time. Baseline data has also assisted in the identification and assessment of key sustainability problems and issues affecting the District (see section 4.5 below).

4.2.3   The baseline information for Mole Valley is set out at Appendix 2. It has been updated, expanded and altered over time as new or alternative data becomes available. The likely evolution of the baseline is considered at section 5 below.

4.3   Difficulties in collecting data and limitations of the data

4.3.1   Joint working with other Surrey local planning authorities, including the County Council, through a series of working groups and workshops, played a key part in the iterative process of developing and populating the baseline information, identifying indicators and formulating sustainability objectives. The workshops included representatives from the four statutory consultation bodies that the Council is required to consult on the Scoping Report and Sustainability Appraisal process.[13] A consultant with significant experience and expertise of Sustainability Appraisal has overseen this process.

4.3.2   One of the major problems with developing local indicators, derived from national and regional objectives and indicators, is the availability of the data at the local level. Part of the joint working process included looking at possible alternative indicators in order to provide baseline information with a local context and perspective. However, where possible, information has been used from national data sets in order to ensure consistency of information in comparison with data at the regional and national level and to allow for the monitoring of trends. Information sources include:

a)   2001 Census information;
b)   NOMIS – official labour market statistics;
c)   Quality of Life Indicators developed by the Audit Commission (these have been developed by Surrey County Council and the Surrey district

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[13] Regulation 4 of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

and borough Councils into 'Surrey Area Profile' statistics and baseline information);

d)   Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI's);

e)   Surrey County Council Sustainable Development department monitoring information, and information from other County Council departments;

f)   Other Government office or agency, national, regional or other data sources consistent with the Government's Indicators of Sustainable Development.

g)   Mole Valley District Council's own information.

4.3.3   Data availability is a problem. It varies between indicators and at different levels of Government. Some statistics do not have national, regional, county and local level availability, preventing comparisons from being made. For example, some data may be available for a national indicator but not available disaggregated to the local / district level. In other instances a national or regional indicator may have no information but assumes this can be developed from information apparently available at the local level. However there may be problems with the ability to collate and monitor this information at a local level to any meaningful degree of reliability and consistency. In some instances the suggested information for an indicator is not available at all. In such instances alternative indicators may have to be developed to facilitate monitoring.

4.4   Main social, environmental and economic issues and problems identified

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Compliance with the SEA Directive

The Environmental Report should provide information on 'any existing problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC' (SEA Directive, Article 5 and Annex I (c)).

4.4.1   To gain an understanding of the nature of Mole Valley and the constraints, pressures and problems affecting the District, summary information on the character of the Mole Valley and the key sustainability issues arising from that information are set out in the table below (Stage A3 of the process). This information has been derived from the baseline information (see section 4.2 above and Appendix 2), in the context of the relevant other policies, plans, programmes and sustainability objectives (see section 4.1 above and Appendix 1).

4.4.2   Table 2 below identifies the key facets of the District's character and comments upon them. From that assessment it draws out the key sustainability issues for Mole Valley, which have influenced the development of particular sustainability objectives. The sustainability objectives and the indicators developed to measure them are set out in the following section, section 4.5 and Table 3 (see also Appendix 6 for refinements made).

Table 2: Characterisation of Mole Valley and Key Sustainability Issues

Population	
Characterisation:	The 2001 census population of the District is 80,287, an increase of 0.8% over the 1991 Mid Year Estimate of 79,600. Mole Valley's age profile is relatively older than the other Surrey districts and the national average. 21.3% of the population is under 18 (compared to 22.6% for England) and 19% of the population is aged 65 or over compared to 15.8%. Projections indicate that the proportion of the population age 65 or over will increase to 23.2% by 2016 and 25.9% by 2026. It is expected that the age structure will become increasingly more elderly (ONS 2006). The proportion of one-person households is slightly lower than the England average (28.9% against 30.1%). The proportion of households with children is also lower (37.6% against 40.9%). However pensioner only households is higher than nationally at 28.2% compared with 23.7% (2001 Census).
Key Sustainability Issues:	There will be issues of dependency and the specific needs of the older age groups in the future. Changing population and household characteristics will have implications for the provision of housing, employment opportunities and services.
Sustainability Objectives:	1, 2, 18

Health	
Characterisation:	Mole Valley's population is relatively healthy with the 74% saying that their health is "good" (the Surrey average, which is higher than the England average of 69%) (2001 Census). Life expectancy is also slightly higher than the South East region and national average. Death rates from circulatory diseases and cancer are also below regional and national averages.
Key Sustainability Issues:	The District's population is generally healthy. However there is a national trend towards a more elderly population and also towards more sedentary lifestyles. These have implications for making provision for the health and well-being of the District's population.
Sustainability Objective:	2

Amenity	
Characterisation:	The District covers an area of some 25,832 hectares (about 100 square miles). The built-up areas comprise only 7.4% of the District. The main built-up areas are Ashtead, which has a population of 13,500. It is, however, predominantly residential in character, as are Fetcham (population 8,400) and Bookham (population 10,300). The main towns are Leatherhead (population 9,700) and Dorking (population 11,300, or 16,000 including the adjoining village of North Holmwood). Much of the countryside is of high environmental quality; about one third is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. An audit to assess the total amount and use of open space within the terms of PPG17 (Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation) has been undertaken. Amongst others it identified over 2700ha of natural and semi-natural greenspace, an extensive network of footpaths, just under 60ha of amenity greenspace, children's play areas, indoor and outdoor sports facilities and a small number of parks and gardens. The Council

Amenity	
Characterisation: ctd	has 9 active allotment sites covering about 20 hectares, with 775 plots cultivated as plots and half plots. There is currently a vacancy level of only 6%, most sites have waiting lists. There are a number of other sites controlled by Parish Councils.

Heritage Open Days are a measure of access to cultural heritage and amenity. In September 2004 some 3,738 visitors were recorded to some 78 sites. This was a slight increase in the number of sites, however, visitor numbers were lower than in 2003.

Dorking is the larger of the two town centres with about 320 retail units and about 23,000m^2 of retail floorspace. Leatherhead is the smaller centre with about 140 units and about 14,900m^2 of floorspace (Roger Tym Report, Nov 2007). Both town centres have similar amounts of office floorspace (about 22,500m^2 each) however Leatherhead does have a greater amount of commercial floorspace on business parks outside the town centre. Ashtead, Bookham and Fetcham have district or local level shopping centres.

The Mole Valley 2006 BVPI General Survey found that residents had a slightly lower degree of satisfaction (71%) with sports and leisure facilities than in 2003-2004 (83%). |
| **Key Sustainability Issues:** | Access to local areas, amenities, town centres and services should be further improved. |
| **Sustainability Objectives:** | 3, 6, 14 |

Noise Sources	
Characterisation:	The M25 motorway passes through the northern part of the District and between Leatherhead and Ashtead. High levels of vehicular movements also take place on the A24, which passes north-south through the District, and the A25 which passes through east-west. Railway lines also pass through the northern part of the District and traverse it. All of these are potential noise generators. The south east part of the District is in close proximity to Gatwick Airport. The 57 LEQ and higher noise contours covers about 9.5% of the District and some 1,100 properties. Some 260ha is within the higher 66 LEQ and above in which permissions for new dwellings will not normally be granted. Any further expansion of Gatwick Airport could increase the areas subject to aircraft noise. Additionally further development at Heathrow Airport could also then have environmental impacts on the northern part of Mole Valley.
Key Sustainability Issues:	The effects of different noise-generating uses and infrastructure is a concern to many residents of the District.
Sustainability Objective:	10

Housing Provision and Housing Costs	
Characterisation:	The South East Plan sets a requirement of 188 dwellings per annum between 2006 and 2026; a minimum of some 3,760 dwellings.

A significant proportion of new housing comes forward on relatively small sites within existing built-up areas. Some 70% of dwellings with permissions, at March 2008, were on sites of less than 0.4 hectares, a slight increase from previous years. |

Housing Provision and Housing Costs	
Characterisation: ctd	Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing (Nov 2006) indicates that new development should be built at higher densities. New housing developments completed on sites of 10 or more units between 2001-2004 just exceeded, on average, 30 dwellings per hectare. Between 2004 – 2007 this had increased to an average of just over 40 dwellings per hectare. The Surrey Structure Plan had a target of 70% of dwellings completed comprising 3 or fewer bedrooms. This District has exceeded the target since 2003. There were no unfit homes in the District in 2006.
	Average house prices in Mole Valley are higher than the Surrey average. The ratio of annual average full-time earnings against average property prices is at 9.88 to 1, slightly lower than the County average of 10.09 to 1 (2007 prices). This is a factor of higher than average annual earnings rather than lower average house prices. Indeed the higher than average house prices exacerbates the problems of housing need.
	The Mole Valley Housing Needs Study 2007 identifies a need to deliver greater levels of affordable housing and this is a Council priority. In a revision to the Local Plan the Council reduced the site thresholds in order that a higher proportion of new developments would deliver affordable housing. At April 2006 there were some 1,933 households on the housing register an increase from 1,318 in March 2005. Buying is out of reach of those on lower incomes and open market rental levels are also high.
Key Sustainability Issues:	The provision for new dwellings to meet housing requirements and the needs of the population must be ensured. Much of the new housing within the District comes forward on relatively small sites and predominantly within built-up areas, this potential source of affordable housing needs to be developed. However, such incremental small-scale development increases the pressure on local infrastructure and increases in density may alter the character of built-up areas.
Sustainability Objectives:	1, 6, 7, 20

Social Inclusiveness, Equal Opportunities and Access to Services	
Characterisation:	According to the 2001 Census some 97.4% of the District's population is white (compared to 98.7% in 1991). Numerically there are some 2,068 persons of other ethnic groups in the District. However none of the ethnic groups forms more than 1% of the total population.
	The 2007 Indices of Multiple Deprivation rank Mole Valley as 339th out of 354 districts in England (354th being the least deprived). However there are areas of relative deprivation within parts of North Leatherhead and Holmwoods wards.
	Hard to reach groups may include young people, homeless, lone parents and gypsies and travellers. Lone parent households form 3.4% of all households in the District compared with 6.4% of households in England.
	Only 19% of the population of the District aged between 16-74 years has no qualifications compared with 29% nationally. The proportion of adults (16-60 years) with poor literacy (18.3%) and numeracy (16.8%) skills is near to the Surrey average.
Characterisation: ctd	The proportion of the working age population claiming key benefits (e.g. incapacity, carers, job seekers and other income

Social Inclusiveness, Equal Opportunities and Access to Services	
	related etc) is 6.6% compared with 14.1% for Great Britain (Nomis).
Key Sustainability Issues:	The issue of the quality of life of sectors of the population and of specific geographical areas needs to be addressed to improve social inclusiveness, equal opportunities and access to services within the District.
Sustainability Objective:	3, 6

Access to Public Transport	
Characterisation:	A higher proportion of Mole Valley residents than nationally travel to work by train (10.8% against 7.4%). Conversely a lower proportion travel to work by bus, only 1.1% against 7.5% nationally (2001 Census). This reflects the generally good accessibility to London by rail on services on the Guildford to London (serving Leatherhead) and Horsham to London (serving Dorking and Leatherhead) lines and cross-county on the Reading to Gatwick Airport line (serving Dorking). There are regular bus services in some areas. However generally bus services are, or are perceived to be, poor, especially in the evenings. Demand Responsive Bus services are being developed.
Key Sustainability Issues:	The use of public transport, especially bus services, should be increased. Accessibility to public transport, especially in the rural areas of the District, should be improved.
Sustainability Objectives:	1, 6, 7

Crime	
Characterisation:	Levels of all types of crime per 1,000 households are below Surrey county averages (2006 – 07). Overall crime rates in Mole Valley are almost 50% lower than nationally.
Key Sustainability Issues:	Crime and the fear of crime should be reduced, including through the design of new development.
Sustainability Objective:	4

Community Facilities	
Characterisation:	Mole Valley District has a population of about 80,300 persons. Dorking and Leatherhead town centres and small local centres provide facilities for the population. There are two NHS hospitals (neither of which has Accident and Emergency facilities), about 16 doctors surgeries and 16 dental surgeries, and 31 County Council or grant maintained schools as well as 3 special schools and 14 independent schools. There are sports and swimming facilities at Leatherhead and Dorking. The Dorking Halls accommodate a range of entertainment functions. The Leatherhead Theatre is now providing a wider range of programmes. There are local libraries at Dorking, Leatherhead, Bookham and Ashtead, and a mobile library serving the villages. Rural communities also have access to recreation grounds, sports pitches and village halls.
Key Sustainability Issues:	Access to community facilities should be retained and further improved.
Sustainability Objective:	3, 6

Biodiversity, Fauna and Flora	
Characterisation:	There are some 12 sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) wholly or partly within the District, covering 1,957 hectares (7.6% of the District's area). 95% of the area of the SSSIs is in a favourable or recovering condition (Natural England Oct 2007). Part of the Ashtead Common SSSI is also designated as a National Nature Reserve. Sites of Nature Conservation Importance cover a further 1,482 hectares. There are currently 5 Local Nature Reserves covering 99 hectares (managed by Surrey Wildlife Trust) and some 3,023 hectares are ancient woodland with much of this being covered by the above environmental designations. The Mole Gap to Reigate Escarpment Special Area of Conservation within both Mole Valley and neighbouring Reigate and Banstead Borough is of European importance. Many of the areas and habitats within the District are covered by Biodiversity Action Plans.
Key Sustainability Issues:	The quality and diversity of habitats in the District should continue to be protected and the quality of habitats should be improved to increase biodiversity.
Sustainability Objective:	13

Soil and Land Contamination	
Characterisation:	The Council has a Contaminated Land Strategy in place and is investigating sites with the greatest potential risk of contamination. There is no Grade 1 agricultural land in the District and only one parcel of Grade 2 land, south of Bookham.
Key Sustainability Issues:	Improvement to land and soil quality is an issue. Land contamination is an ongoing environmental and sustainability concern in the District. IS IT??
Sustainability Objective:	8

Air Quality	
Characterisation:	Local monitoring has indicated that air quality in Mole Valley is within national limits.
Key Sustainability Issues:	Whilst at the present time air quality limits are not being breached there is the potential for this to happen as a result of congestion, new development and other factors.
Sustainability Objective:	9

Climate Factors	
Characterisation:	Recent Government predictions include an increase in temperature, and an increase in the incidence of flooding and subsidence. Hotter, drier, summers are predicted in Surrey (Source Surrey Community Strategy).
Key Sustainability Issues:	Climate change is a global issue which should be tackled at the local level to avoid serious environmental, economic and social implications.
Sustainability Objectives:	5, 16, 17

Cultural Heritage	
Characterisation:	The District's local heritage is much valued. There are some 28 Conservation Areas wholly or partly within the District, totalling

Cultural Heritage	
	some 398 hectares (within the District). There are just over 1,000 Listed Buildings and 27 Ancient Monuments. Areas of archaeological potential cover almost 420 hectares. The National Trust is a major land and property owner in the District. There are local museums at Leatherhead and Dorking.
Key Sustainability Issues:	Conservation designations and priorities may constrain development that would otherwise have sustainability benefits. Conservation of the historic environment is important for the quality of life.
Sustainability Objective:	14

Countryside	
Characterisation:	Only 7.4% of the District is built up. Therefore some 92.6% of the District is countryside or villages within the countryside. The Metropolitan Green Belt covers some 76% of the total area of the District (and 80.4% of the countryside)
	Approximately 4,100 hectares of the District is Countryside Beyond the Green Belt. This is 15.8% of the District's total area. Just over 9,400 hectares is within the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This is 36.4% of the total area of the District. The Area of Great Landscape Value designation covers some 11,685 hectares or 45.2% of the District's area.
	The boundary of the Green Belt is shown on the Mole Valley Local Plan Proposals Map (adopted October 2000). Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 states that the essential characteristic of Green Belts is their permanence and their protection must be maintained as far as can be seen ahead. Consequently detailed Green Belt boundaries should be altered only exceptionally.
Key Sustainability Issues:	Paragraph 2.10 of PPG2 states that when drawing Green Belt boundaries local planning authorities should take account of the need to promote sustainable patterns of development. The consequences for sustainable development of the Local Development Framework channelling development towards urban areas should be considered.
Sustainability Objective:	7

Traffic and Commuting	
Characterisation:	Surrey has the highest car ownership and most congested roads in the country outside London. The 2001 Census indicated that some 63.7% of journeys to work by Mole Valley residents are by car. Levels of car ownership are significantly higher than the national average with some 47.5% of Mole Valley households having 2 or more cars (compared with 29.5% for England), and households without a car are only 13.1% compared to 26.8% for England).
	The 2001 Census indicates that some 18,804 residents work outside the District whilst some 19,636 workers commute into the District. Consequently the District has changed from being one of net out-commuting in 1991 to one of net in-commuting in 2001 (of 832 persons).
Key Sustainability Issues:	The motor car is seen as a main environmental polluter and cause of congestion. The use of the car as the primary mode of travel needs to be reduced.

Sustainability Objectives:	6, 9, 15, 16, 20

Economic Development	
Characterisation:	Mole Valley is economically prosperous with about 5,000 firms employing approximately 46,000 persons (ONS). Unemployment rates are one of the lowest nationally at 0.7% (August 2008). The service sector is the main employer, with headquarter premises of a number of national or international companies being present in the District. Dorking, in the centre of the District, is a traditional market town and retail centre. The main employers include Friends Provident, UNUM, Kuoni Travel and Biwater. Johnston Engineering is a major manufacturing company in the town. Leatherhead, in the north of the District, has a smaller town centre but is the larger commercial centre with a number of business and research parks. Major employers in the Leatherhead area include ESSO, ERA Technology, KBR (Halliburton Group) and Logica CMG. The total commercial floorspace stock (offices, factories and warehouses) is 496,000m^2 (April 2007). Notwithstanding a strong local economy, there is vacant floorspace and there are also outstanding planning permissions for commercial development. There is therefore further opportunity for the local economy to grow.
Key Sustainability Issues:	Further commercial development and employment growth may lead to issues of an overheated economy, traffic congestion, housing and labour shortage and skills considerations, and increases in in-commuting.
Sustainability Objectives:	6, 15, 18, 19, 20

Waste	
Characterisation:	Information on waste for monitoring purposes is collected by Surrey County Council as the waste disposal authority and as part of the work on the Waste Development Framework. Therefore waste issues regarding sustainability are primarily dealt with at the County level. Mole Valley DC is the waste collection authority. In 2003-04 some 410kg of waste was collected per head (compared with 438.5kg for England). In 2006 – 07 some 39% of Mole Valley waste was recycled compared with 31% for Surrey. The residual household waste per head for Mole Valley is 231kg per head compared with 373kg per head for Surrey.
Key Sustainability Issues:	The County Council's Waste Development Framework should ensure local sustainability factors, such as the waste management hierarchy, are given appropriate weight.
Sustainability Objectives:	21

Minerals	
Characterisation:	Surrey County Council (SCC) is the minerals planning authority, which is preparing the review of the current Minerals Local Plan. Information on potentially workable mineral zones (PMZs) in the District is available from SCC, following survey work in 2004. Minerals issues will be dealt with through the emerging Minerals Development Framework.
Key Sustainability Issues:	Mole Valley District Council should influence the County Council's Minerals Development Framework to ensure local sustainability factors and environmental concerns are given appropriate weight in the identification of sites for mineral extraction.
Sustainability Objective:	21

Previously Developed Land	
Characterisation:	PPS3 (para 41) includes a target that some 60% of new housing should be on previously developed land. Since 2001 the Council has achieved annual rates of development on previously developed land of between 90% and 98%. The Council does not achieve rates of 100% because the conversion of former agricultural buildings to residential is considered to be greenfield development (see PPS3 Annex B). With the exception of conversion of redundant buildings the Council has not permitted any large scale development on greenfield sites in recent years.
Key Sustainability Issues:	See 'Housing'. Maintaining such high rates of development on previously developed land in future years may influence the type of development that can be accommodated and incrementally alter the quality of life in the built-up areas and their character. The need to identify deliverable and developable sites and not count windfalls as a major component of supply could result in the need to identify greenfield sites.
Sustainability Objective:	7

Sustainable Development and Construction	
Characterisation:	There is concern that data on new and retrofit homes meeting EcoHomes 'very good' or 'excellent' standard, or commercial building at the local level meeting the BREEAM 'very good' standard may not be available from known information sources.
Key Sustainability Issues:	Alternative local indicators to measure sustainable construction may need to be developed.
Sustainability Objective:	21

Water Quality and Water Quantity	
Characterisation:	<u>Flood Plains</u> are a constraint on development. The Environment Agency is consulted on planning applications in areas liable to flooding. There should be no increase in the number of properties at risk of flooding. However flood plain boundaries are themselves subject to revision. Within the District there are thought to be around 1,500 properties in areas identified by the Environment Agency as liable to flooding. Sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS) can ameliorate the effects of surface water flows into existing drainage and river systems. River quality (River Mole) is understood to fall in the 'fair' to 'good' categories for chemical and biological indicators. Please note: In 2008 a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment was undertaken to look at all sources of flooding and the potential impact on the District. This is a 'living' document that will be revised as new information becomes available. <u>Water Supply and Water Levels:</u> It is understood that 85% of the Sutton and East Surrey Water Company's supply comes from groundwater sources. There is therefore a need to protect the quality of that water through ensuring that any development that takes place is appropriate. There are 3 inner source protections zones for groundwater abstraction within the District. <u>Water Consumption:</u> Information from Sutton and East Surrey Water Company indicates that the average property in their area consumes 600 litres per day and this can rise to 976 litres per property at peak times. This is an annual average of 700 litres per day and which is one-third higher than the national average. There may also be water loss through leakage in the water supply system. New figures indicate average domestic use of 475 litres per day in the Sutton and East Surrey area.
Key Sustainability Issues:	The issue of flooding is not just one of environmental impact but is also one of risk to human life. There is therefore the need to protect public well-being by minimising the harm from flooding. The Council would welcome more local information about longer-term water supply issues affecting the District. There is a need to address issues such as the reduction of water consumption and wastage, and increasing or encouraging the recycling of water. There is concern as to whether monitoring of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems as a sustainability indicator can be carried out in a meaningful way from known information sources.
Sustainability Objective:	5, 12

Energy Consumption and Efficiency	
Characterisation:	Experimental statistics from BERR on energy consumption for 2005 indicates that domestic energy consumption per household in Mole Valley is 28,020kwh. This is 31% higher than the national median figure of 21,290kwh. The Council is concerned that information about new developments meeting EcoHomes or BREEAM standards may not be available at the local level or be capable of being monitored through building control. Information or monitoring of measures of reducing CO_2 levels at the local level

	may also not be available.	
Key Sustainability Issues:	The reduced use of energy and / or increased energy efficiency in new development is an issue that needs to be addressed given its impact on climate change factors. The potential for the production and use of renewable energy in the District needs to be considered.	
Sustainability Objectives:	21, 22, 23	

4.5 The Sustainability Appraisal framework

4.5.1 The joint working approach led to the development of an initial set of 21 sustainability objectives against which the objectives and emerging policy options for the Core Strategy have been tested to assess how effective they will be in contributing to sustainable development (Appendix 5). However, following consultation on the Scoping Report and the initial round of Sustainability Appraisals in East Surrey, including the appraisal of the Mole Valley Core Strategy Issues and Options, the sustainability objectives have been modified to improve the effectiveness of the SA framework (Stage A4 & A5 of the process).

4.5.2 In addition, the indicators associated with each objective, developed to help measure the effect of the LDF and its policies, were also been updated and improved to reflect recent Government documents. Appendix 6 to this report sets out the original 21 SA objectives and indicators and highlights the changes made.

4.5.2 The modified set of SA objectives and indicators, used to appraise the Core Strategy Preferred Options and subsequent revisions to the document, are set out below. Decision-aiding questions were used to assist the process and are available on request.

Table 3: Sustainability Objectives and Indicators

Sustainable Development theme: Social progress that recognises the needs of everyone		
Objective Number	**Objective**	**Indicator**
1	To provide sufficient housing to enable people to live in a home suitable to their needs and which they can afford.	a. Housing completions b. Percentage of affordable housing delivered per year c. Number of households on the housing register d. Average property price compared against average earnings e. Number of unfit homes in the District f. The proportion of new homes with fewer than 3 bedrooms g. Number of older people helped to live at home
2	To facilitate the improved health and well-being of the whole population.	a. Death rates from circulatory disease, cancer and suicides b. Infant mortality rates c. Conceptions among girls under 18 d. Life expectancy e. Percentage of people whose health is classed as good f. Number of new healthcare facilities provided and the number lost to alternative uses g. Performance of Acute NHS Trust and completion of Extra Care Housing

Sustainable Development theme: Social progress that recognises the needs of everyone		
Objective Number	**Objective**	**Indicator**
3	To reduce poverty and social exclusion.	a. Proportion of children under 16 living in income-deprived households b. Percentage of population of working age claiming key benefits c. Percentage of population income-deprived d. Average score for indices of Multiple Deprivation e. Percentage of people achieving 5 or more A*-C grade GCSEs f. Level of qualification of those living in the District g. Proportion of adults with poor literacy and numeracy skills h. Percentage of all respondents satisfied with the local bus service i. Number of journeys made on local buses j. Access to services k. Percentage of rural households at set distances from key services
4	To create and maintain safer and more secure communities.	a. The number of recorded offences per 1,000 people b. The proportion of people that live in fear of crime c. Pedestrians/cyclists – the number killed and seriously injured d. The number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents e. Deaths and casualties arising from fires
5	To minimise the harm from flooding.	a. Number of properties at risk from flooding b. Number of new properties linked to sustainable drainage systems c. Area of land identified for flood storage purposes as part of catchment flood management plan considered for future revision d. The number of properties or households that have access to the Environment Agency's flood warning system
6	To improve accessibility to all services and facilities.	a. Proportion of major development located in accessible areas b. Accessibility to public transport, cycling or walking c. Number and direction (and distance) of journey to work movements

Sustainable Development theme: Effective protection of the environment		
Objective Number	**Objective**	**Indicator**
7	To make the best use of previously developed land and existing buildings.	a. Percentage of dwellings built on previously developed land b. The amount of commercial development built on previously developed land in urban areas c. Average density on sites with 10 or more dwellings d. The number of retail developments within and around town centres
8	To reduce land contamination and safeguard soil quality	a. The amount of contaminated land remediated b. Area of grade 1,2 and 3a agricultural land lost to development

Sustainable Development theme: Effective protection of the environment		
Objective Number	Objective	Indicator
	and quantity.	
9	To ensure air quality continues to improve.	a. Annual average of NO2 and PM10, within AQMAs (Air Quality Management Areas) relative to national standards b. The number of properties affected by poor air quality c. Level of vehicle emissions
10	To minimise noise pollution.	a. The monitoring of LEQ noise levels around airports b. The percentage of population which would benefit from new quiet road surfacing
11	To minimise light pollution.	a. Number of new floodlighting installations including the number of fittings installed which minimise light pollution
12	To maintain and improve the water quality of rivers and groundwater.	a. Percentage of rivers in plan area whose biological quality is rated as 'good' b. Percentage of rivers in plan area whose chemical quality is rated as 'good' c. Quality of groundwater
13	To conserve and enhance biodiversity within the plan area.	a. Hectares of land designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) b. The number and area of Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCIs) and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) within Mole Valley c. Extent of ancient woodlands
14	To protect and enhance the natural, archaeological and historic environments and cultural assets.	a. Number of Listed Buildings, Ancient Monuments and Conservation Areas b. Proportion of statutory Listed Buildings at risk c. Proportion of statutory Listed Buildings demolished or removed from the list owing to approved or unauthorised alternatives d. Proportion of Scheduled Ancient Monuments at risk e. Proportion of Conservation Areas with an appraisal that has been reviewed within the previous 5 years f. The number of unauthorised works undertaken within Conservation Areas in the previous 4 years that have been enforced against g. The percentage of residents very or fairly satisfied with cultural assets h. Improvement in accessibility of the countryside to the public via the Rights of Way network
15	To reduce road congestion and the need to travel.	a. Traffic reduction b. Proportion of travel to work by mode c. Proportion of schools with current travel plans d. Length of cycle tracks and number of cycling trips e. Accessibility by public transport, cycling and walking f. Household transport by mode g. Proportion of new development incorporating maximum parking standards
16	To reduce greenhouse gases.	a. Emissions of greenhouse gases, CO_2

Sustainable Development theme: Effective protection of the environment		
Objective Number	**Objective**	**Indicator**
17	To ensure that the District is prepared for the impacts of climate change.	a. Capacity during 'critical periods' to supply water without the need for restrictions b. Number of homes damaged as a result of an extreme weather event

Sustainable Development theme: Maintenance of a stable level of economic growth		
Objective Number	**Objective**	**Indicator**
18	Provide for employment opportunities.	a. Proportion of people claiming unemployment benefits who have been out of work for more than 1 year b. Percentage of population income deprived c. Percentage of people of working age that are economically active d. The net change in the number of VAT registrations and deregistrations e. Industrial breakdown of VAT registrations f. Average annual earnings for full-time males and females working in the District
19	Make land available to meet the needs of the economy.	a. The number of granted planning permissions for commercial development b. The area of employment sites lost to other uses c. The number of rural diversification schemes d. Percentage of vacant employment floorspace e. Shop surveys (growth / change in floorspace use and vacancy rates)
20	Support economic growth which is inclusive, innovative and sustainable.	a. Number of persons registered in adult education classes b. Growth in GDP and Value Added c. Percentage of economically active people that are unemployable d. Balance between labour supply and labour demand e. Number of residents working at, or from, home

Sustainable Development theme: Prudent use of natural resources		
Objective Number	**Objective**	**Indicator**
21	To achieve sustainable production and use of resources.	a. Number of businesses producing local food and local products b. Number of businesses actively engaged in the Sustainable Business Programme c. Amount of energy supplied to homes and businesses d. Number of homes taking up energy saving grants for loft insulation, double glazing or cavity wall insulation e. Percentage new build and retrofit homes meeting Ecohomes 'excellent' standard and the percentage of commercial buildings meeting BREEAM 'excellent' standard f. The number of construction sites recycling or reusing demolition waste g. Amount of waste disposed of in landfill

Sustainable Development theme: Prudent use of natural resources		
Objective Number	**Objective**	**Indicator**
		h. Waste collected per capita i. Percentage of waste recycled j. Percentage of waste composted k. Household per capita consumption (PCC) of water l. Water supply and demand balance m. The number of water meters installed n. Percentage of new developments incorporating grey water collection
22	To increase energy efficiency of new and existing development.	a. Energy use per capita b. Improvement in dwelling SAP rating across District c. Number of homes incorporating CHP heating d. (Estimated energy savings – possible local indicator)
23	To increase the production and use of renewable energy.	a. Installed capacity for energy production from renewable sources b. Annual electricity production from renewable sources c. Installed capacity for heat generation from renewable sources d. Annual heat production from renewable sources e. Greenhouse gases displaced annually by total renewable energy production f. Area of land planted with short rotation coppice g. Area of land planted with energy crops for transport biofuels

5. CORE STRATEGY ISSUES AND OPTIONS

5.1 Main strategic options considered and how they were identified

> **Compliance with the SEA Directive**
>
> The Environmental Report should consider 'reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme' and give 'an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with' (SEA Directive, Article 5(1) and Annex I(h)).

5.1.1   The Council's Core Strategy Issues and Options consultation paper, 'Shaping the Future' was published in December 2005. The consultation paper principally addressed the main issues for which reasonable alternative options could be identified. The emerging options were identified using information from a number of different sources:

- Other policies, plans and programmes, particularly national planning guidance, regional policy and the emerging South East Plan, and the adopted Surrey Structure Plan (see section 4.1 and Appendix 1);
- Baseline information (see section 4.2 and Appendix 2) helped to identify main issues and problems (see section 4.4);
- Background studies, including those on housing land availability, housing needs and employment;
- Public consultation on the development of the Local Development Framework carried out jointly with the review of the Community Strategy (rebadged the Community Plan), which involved a questionnaire survey at the end of 2004[14] and a series of community workshops in the Spring of 2005[15].

5.1.2   The Issues and Options consultation was also used to seek affirmation of the shared vision developed for the Core Strategy of the LDF and the Community Strategy and the emerging plan objectives. The emerging plan objectives had been tested against the sustainability objectives for compatibility, which highlighted possible conflicts and need for mitigation (see Appendix 5), and led to the development of a more detailed tier of plan objectives to address this.

5.1.3   The issues and options identified in the 'Shaping the Future' consultation paper are set out below, together with an outline of the reasons for identifying the options.

Housing – location of development

At this stage in the preparation of the Core Strategy the Surrey Structure Plan required provision to be made for 155 new homes each year between 2006 and 2016, and the emerging South East Plan suggested that this should be increased to at least 170 new homes each year in Mole Valley. This amounted to 3400 over the next 20 years, representing an increase of about 10% in the

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[14] The Future for Mole Valley, Survey of Residents and Stakeholder Groups, November / December 2004, QCL Market Research (January 2005)
[15] Public consultation to inform LDF, Community Strategy and Statement of Community Involvement, Nigel Westaway and Associates (May 2005)

current number of homes in the District[16]. Government policy and guidance emphasised the need to direct new housing to existing built-up areas using previously developed land. It also sought to ensure that the Green Belt and countryside are safeguarded.

In the past nearly all new housing has been built, through infilling and redevelopment, in the built-up areas of Mole Valley. Some local people are concerned about over-development and increasing pressure on infrastructure and services in the built-up areas, and considered that the Council should look outside the towns and villages for new sites for housing. However, this may not significantly reduce development pressures in the built-up areas.

Taking the above into consideration, the following options were identified for the location of new housing development:

a.   Build new homes only on previously developed land within existing built-up areas.
b.   Build new homes on previously developed land within existing built-up areas and on greenfield sites on the edge of the main built-up areas of Dorking, Leatherhead, Ashtead, Fetcham and Bookham.
c.   Build new homes on previously developed land within existing built-up areas, on greenfield sites on the edge of the main built-up areas and on greenfield sites on the edge of larger rural villages.

Housing – size and type of new homes

In Mole Valley, there is a trend towards smaller households of single people or couples without children. The average household size is now 2.35 people, down from 2.7 people in 1981[17]. Some 29% of households comprise only one person – pensioners living by themselves account for more than half of single person households – and a further 37% of households consist of just two people.

However, around 70% of existing homes in Mole Valley have three or more bedrooms. Nearly half of all single person households and three-quarters of two person households live in homes with three or more bedrooms.

Existing policy (Mole Valley Local Plan) is to build more homes to meet the needs of smaller households, including one, two and small three bedroom homes suitable for single people, young couples, newly formed households, expanding families and the elderly[18]. In 2003-2004, 60% of all new homes built had one or two bedrooms and 20% had three bedrooms. Many of these were flats and apartments. Some local people expressed concern at the numbers of these being built.

Taking these factors into consideration, the following options were identified for the type and size of new homes that should be built in Mole Valley:

a.   Most important to build 1 and 2 bedroom flats and apartments.
b.   Most important to build 1 and 2 bedroom terraced and semi-detached houses.
c.   Most important to build 3 bedroom houses.

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[16] The South East Plan now recommends a further increase to at least 188 dwellings per annum.
[17] Office of National Statistics Census information
[18] Mole Valley Housing Needs Study 2002, updated 2004

d.   Most important to build 4 or more bedroom houses.

Providing more affordable homes

The Housing Needs Study and baseline information showed that even smaller homes are out of reach of many people because of the present relationship between house prices and incomes. The high cost of housing is driving many local residents out of the District to less expensive areas. This included many essential workers whose employment is of particular importance to the local community. The strength of the housing market also meant that many younger people have to live with their parents when they would prefer to be living independently.

The need to provide more affordable housing in Mole Valley was one of the biggest issues identified in the surveys and discussed in the workshops held, particularly amongst 18 to 24 year olds. It is one of the top priorities of the Council and its partners. Affordable housing is housing that is provided with a subsidy for people who are unable to afford a suitable home.

Current planning policies require that a percentage of new housing on the larger development sites is affordable, that is, includes shared ownership or social rented housing. However, the supply of larger sites in Mole Valley that could provide affordable housing is likely to be limited. This is because nearly all new housing development takes place on small to medium sized sites in the built-up areas.

Given that the provision of affordable housing is a priority, the following options on how best to achieve an increase in provision were identified:

a.   Require its provision on small to medium sized sites as well as on larger sites.
b.   Increase the percentage of affordable housing on sites where it is required to be provided.
c.   Develop larger greenfield sites where there are likely to be greater opportunities to provide more affordable housing.

Particular housing requirements

There will also be a continuing need to provide additional accommodation for the elderly requiring more care and support, such as sheltered housing as well as nursing homes and similar institutions. Population trends indicate that the number of pensioners in Mole Valley is expected to increase, with the biggest increases expected in pensioners over 85.

The Council is also required to take into account the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers and make suitable provision for them.

Given that the Council is required to meet the accommodation needs of particular groups in the community, there were no reasonable options that could be set out. However the consultation paper asked whether respondents had any comments on how and where the Council should make provision for the elderly, Gypsies and Travellers and other groups with particular needs in order that these could be used for more detailed policy development later on.

Infrastructure

One of the main concerns about new development, particularly the building of new homes, is that the provision of infrastructure, services and community facilities should be related to the scale and pace of growth. This includes the provision of roads, public transport, water supply, sewerage, power supplies, waste management and recycling, health facilities, schools, youth facilities, shops, social services, police, fire and rescue, leisure and recreation, and other community facilities.

Because most new housing in Mole Valley is built on small sites within the built-up areas, it is difficult to phase development and make sure that the provision of infrastructure and services is in line with the rate of building. There are concerns about the ability of the existing infrastructure to cope with these gradual but collectively significant increases in demand. The Council is working with service providers to identify constraints on development, for example, adequate water supply.

There are also concerns about where the necessary investment will come from if the agencies involved do not build adequate safeguards into their investment programmes to allow them to accelerate provision where this becomes necessary.

Because of the unacceptable cost to local residents of building new development without the necessary infrastructure, it may be necessary to consider withholding planning permission, even on small sites, where it is evident that infrastructure and service provision is inadequate.

The following options therefore were identified as reasonable alternatives with the aim of ensuring that necessary infrastructure, services and community facilities are provided:

a.   Continue to require developers to contribute towards the cost of provision only when specific facilities are needed to support that development.
b.   Require developers to contribute towards the overall cost of providing infrastructure and services each time a house or commercial site is developed.
c.   Withhold planning permission where infrastructure and service provision is inadequate.

Traffic congestion

Traffic congestion is one of the main issues facing Mole Valley. Nearly half of households in the District own 2 or more cars. Around two out of three Mole Valley residents travel to work by car.

Approximately 40,000 people travel into and out of Mole Valley to work every day. Most journeys are made by car. In addition there are many journeys made by people crossing the District to other employment centres and major traffic generators including Heathrow and Gatwick. All these journeys, as well as those to schools, are creating significant peak hour congestion. This has an adverse impact on the quality of life in the District.

There are a range of specific measures to tackle local congestion problems. Most hinge on reducing the need to travel by car by improving accessibility and the choice of alternative forms of transport, and limiting car use, for example by providing less parking in new developments and town centres

alongside other traffic management measures. A number of possible solutions were suggested as a result of the community workshops held.

For the purposes of preparing the Core Strategy, different options to address the traffic impact of new development on the road network were identified:

a.   Allow new development, including new homes, to be built without providing any car parking.
b.   Allow new development providing more jobs only where it is accessible by public transport or where there are arrangements to reduce travel by car, such as car sharing, bus links to railway stations and parking restrictions.

Maintaining a successful local economy

Mole Valley as a whole is an affluent district with one of the lowest unemployment rates in the country.

Local businesses often find it hard to recruit workers in lower paid jobs, which can lead them to relocate in other areas where labour is cheaper. Public consultation surveys showed that the main concern of local people who took part is keeping existing businesses in Mole Valley, whilst many also thought that attracting new businesses and jobs to the District is important.

Even though the economy is buoyant there are currently some vacant offices, factories and warehouses and also outstanding planning permissions for further commercial development. This suggests that there is potential for the District's economy to grow, although this might lead to greater shortages of housing and labour, more commuters coming in and increased congestion.

Taking into account all the information available, the following options for maintaining a successful local economy were identified:

a.   Continue the current policy of safeguarding existing suitably located employment sites from redevelopment to other uses.
b.   Relax the policy and aim to balance the number of jobs and resident workers in the District by providing new homes through redevelopment of some employment sites.

In addition, looking at the possibility of using some existing employment land for housing, the following options addressing how future employment needs might be met were identified:

a.   Redevelop existing employment sites more intensively.
b.   Develop greenfield sites for employment use.

Shopping

The need to ensure vibrant town and local centres emerged as an important local issue. Dorking and Leatherhead are both small market towns with a range of shops, businesses and leisure facilities in the town centres. They are also social hubs for those living in the towns and the countryside and villages around them. It is important to maintain the vitality and viability for the general well being of the District and the local economy as well as for all those who live in, work in or visit Mole Valley. A co-ordinated approach to the management and enhancement of both town centres needs to be sustained,

but we need to decide whether any change in direction is needed to maintain their competitiveness and vitality.

Dorking town centre:

Dorking has an attractive town centre with a good range of shops, including a high proportion of independent and specialist traders, and a good range of cafes, restaurants and leisure facilities. However, there is some uncertainty about the future of the antiques trade in West Street and supermarket provision. Also, there are not many large shop units in the town centre, and a lot of the small business premises behind the main shopping streets have been redeveloped for housing thus altering the traditional mix in the town. Dorking enjoys relatively good access by public transport but traffic congestion and parking are seen as problems.

Dorking continues to face competition from neighbouring town centres and from changing retail patterns (such as mail order and the internet) and does not have many key national multiple shops. Increasing rentals are making it difficult for smaller shops and there is some pressure to increase the proportion of cafes and restaurants at the expense of shop units.

The following alternative options for Dorking town centre therefore were identified:

a. Encourage further development in Dorking town centre to provide more shops, business and leisure activities.
b. Encourage a change in the current mix of uses in Dorking town centre to provide more restaurants, business and leisure activities, instead of retail shop units.
c. Keep Dorking town centre as it is – resist the loss of retail shop units to other uses.

Leatherhead town centre:

Leatherhead town centre is undergoing a period of change and renewed interest, which has included substantial investment in redevelopment and in improving the townscape. Leatherhead now has a town centre hotel and a developing evening economy with a good range of cafes and restaurants and the revival of its theatre. There is continuing pressure for the change of use of shop units to cafes and restaurants.

Leatherhead has a large town centre supermarket and a good range of national multiples for a small market town, although this is seen to be at the expense of independent traders. There is a shortage of medium to large sites for retail development. Its daytime pedestrianised shopping streets and layout make Leatherhead easily accessible to those using the Shopmobility scheme and those with wheelchairs and pushchairs. However, although the train service is good, the bus service is not as good as it could be and there are perceived problems with car access and parking.

There is a large catchment of both office workers and residents but Leatherhead faces stiff competition from other larger town centres and smaller local centres as well as from changing patterns of retailing (such as mail order and the internet).

The following alternative options for Leatherhead town centre therefore were identified:

a.   Encourage a change in the current mix of uses in Leatherhead town centre to provide more restaurants, business and leisure activities, instead of retail shop units

b.   Keep Leatherhead town centre as it is - resist any further loss of retail shop units to other uses

Local shopping centres

The local centres at Bookham, Fetcham and those in Ashtead, at The Street and Craddocks Parade, are important focal points for local communities, providing easy access to a range of shops and services. In common with the District's town centres, they face competition from other centres and changing patterns of retailing and experience pressure to change the use of shop units to restaurants, takeaways and offices.

The following options to sustain the role of the local centres at Bookham, Fetcham and Ashtead were identified:

a.   Allow changes of use even if these result in the loss of retail shop units.

b.   Keep the local centres as they are - resist any further loss of retail shop units to other uses.

Rural issues

Approximately 90% of Mole Valley is countryside. It includes villages, hamlets, farms and scattered dwellings and is occupied by about 28% of the District's residents.

Public consultation highlighted the issues that are of most importance to those living in the rural areas of Mole Valley. Main issues include:

- poor public transport;
- the loss of local shops, post offices and other facilities;
- the need to provide further community facilities; and
- the lack of affordable housing.

Poor transport in the rural areas was being tackled by a number of initiatives such as those of the East Surrey Rural Transport Partnership, which include the demand-responsive Buses 4U, Wheels2Work and Wheels2Learn mopeds for young people.

Village shops:

Local shops, schools, social and health facilities make an important contribution to life in the rural areas. They are particularly important for the elderly and less mobile, including those who have no access to a car or public transport.

In recent years a number of village shops have closed, some because of the difficulty of remaining viable as shopping patterns have changed.

Although the Council does not have the power to prevent the closure of shops and other village facilities, it will continue to work with partner organisations to try to prevent closures or cutbacks wherever possible, and to encourage replacements for those shops or facilities that have been lost. The Council

can continue to support the retention of facilities by protecting them against proposals for other forms of development. For example, the loss of village shops can be resisted by insisting that they are marketed for retail purposes at a reasonable price for a length of time.

The following alternative approaches to how the Council should deal with applications for the change of use of village shops therefore were identified:

a.   Accept market forces and allow changes of use that result in the loss of village shops.
b.   Resist any further loss of village shops.

Location of new development to meet local needs:

Provision will need to be made for additional community facilities, and other development such as new housing, to meet the needs of local communities.

The current policy of safeguarding the countryside has a number of advantages, ensuring that the open countryside and Green Belt are protected from inappropriate development and that the best use is made of previously developed land in the built-up areas of Mole Valley. This policy means that village boundaries are tightly drawn to ensure that new development does not encroach on the countryside.

However, there may be disadvantages to this approach, in that it may not take sufficient account of local social and economic needs. At present sites for new housing, employment and community facilities needed to maintain the vitality and viability of villages must largely be provided within the villages. This sometimes makes it difficult to find suitable sites.

The following options for the location of new development to meet local needs were identified:

a.   Ensure that any new development required to meet local needs continues to be provided within villages.
b.   Allow villages to expand onto greenfield sites beyond their existing boundaries to accommodate new development required to meet local needs.

Affordable housing in rural villages:

Where local need could be demonstrated, provision can be made for affordable housing on sites both within and adjoining villages as an exception to policies protecting the countryside. This approach had the advantage of being flexible, as provision could be made for affordable housing as and when the need can be demonstrated.

The disadvantage is that sites for affordable housing to meet local needs are not identified early on in the plan-making process in the same way as allocated housing sites, which may mean that different options are not as thoroughly tested as they could be. An alternative would be to work to establish local need and identify possible alternative sites for debate at an early stage in the preparation of plan documents.

The following options for providing affordable housing in rural villages were identified:

    a.   Continue to allow affordable housing as an exception to policy where local need can be demonstrated.

    b.   Identify sites for affordable housing in villages as part of a Development Plan.

5.2   How social, environmental and economic issues were considered in choosing the Preferred Options

> **Compliance with the SEA Directive**
>
> The Environmental Report should provide 'an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information' (SEA Directive, Article 5 and Annex I(h)).

5.2.1   A Sustainability Appraisal of the Core Strategy Issues and Options was undertaken in November 2005. This involved assessing the alternative options identified (set out at section 5.1 above) against the SA objectives (set out at section 4.5 and table 3 above). The resulting matrices show in detail how social, environmental and economic issues were considered. The sustainability appraisal of the Issues and Options is attached at Appendix 7. It includes a description of how the assessment was undertaken and a commentary on the likely effects of the different options.

5.2.2   The results of the Sustainability Appraisal, together with the results of the public consultation on the Core Strategy Issues and Options paper 'Shaping the Future', were taken into account in selecting the Core Strategy Preferred Options.

5.2.3   It is not the role of the SA by itself to determine which Core Strategy policy options should be selected and progressed. The role of the SA is to assist in the identification of the likely effects of the different options by highlighting sustainability implications, and to put forward recommendations for improving their sustainability. The sustainability appraisal of the Preferred Options is attached at Appendix 8.

5.3   Other options considered and why these were rejected

5.3.1   A summary of the reasons for the selection and rejection of the options considered in the Core Strategy Issues and Options Consultation Paper is outlined below.

Housing - location of new development

5.3.2   The options identified for the location of new housing development were:

    a.   Build new homes only on previously developed land within existing built-up areas.

    b.   Build new homes on previously developed land within existing built-up areas and on greenfield sites on the edge of the main built-up areas of Dorking, Leatherhead, Ashtead, Fetcham and Bookham.

    c.   Build new homes on previously developed land within existing built-up areas, on greenfield sites on the edge of the main built-up areas and on greenfield sites on the edge of larger rural villages.

Consideration of these options for housing development at the Issues and Options stage led to their identification as alternative spatial strategies for the Preferred Options. Option a, the first alternative, can be described as 'concentration' and is the Council's preferred option. It scores highly on sustainability objectives to protect the natural environment, particularly making the best use of previously developed land and maximising the use of public transport and other alternatives to the car. It reflects national, regional and county planning policy to protect the Green Belt and safeguard the countryside, and the strong view of the community that the countryside should be safeguarded and enhanced.

However, sustainability appraisal in conjunction with evidence on housing land availability has highlighted the possible limitations of this approach in the longer term, particularly if housing allocations increase significantly in the emerging South East Plan. In this regard options b, 'expansion' and c 'dispersal of expansion', might give more certainty in housing land supply and therefore perform better in the longer term against social sustainability objectives, including the possible delivery of larger sites yielding more affordable housing, whilst clearly having a more significant effect on the environment.

The provision of housing land is a key tenet of Government policy and regarded as important to the continued economic success of the South East region. For this reason it is not acceptable to select option a alone if there is any doubt that it might hinder the achievement of this important Core Strategy objective. Options b and c, therefore, are not rejected out of hand and are offered for further debate at this Preferred Options stage as part of a possible sequential approach to the provision of land for development should option a prove unable to provide enough sites. This is a realistic approach in a district tightly constrained by the Green Belt.

The sustainability appraisal highlights clear opportunities for mitigation in the selection of any greenfield sites for development, should this prove necessary, to ensure the selection of the most sustainable sites and the limitation of adverse effects. These are addressed at section 5.5 below.

<u>Housing - Type and size of new homes</u>

5.3.3 The options identified for the type and size of new homes that should be built in Mole Valley were:

   a.   Most important to build 1 and 2 bedroom flats and apartments.
   b.   Most important to build 1 and 2 bedroom terraced and semi-detached houses.
   c.   Most important to build 3 bedroom houses.
   d.   Most important to build 4 or more bedroom houses.

The Housing Needs Study identifies the biggest need as being for the accommodation of small households in smaller units, which would support a continuation of existing Local Plan policy. In this regard, the provision of flats and apartments makes the best use of land as development is at a higher density. This option performs best against the sustainability objectives.

However, the Housing Needs Study also identifies a need for smaller family housing, and the views of the community support the provision of small houses rather than flats and apartments, partly due to the perception of the numbers of these that have been built in recent years and to community

aspirations. The provision of smaller housing rather than flats may not make such good use of land and is not as sustainable, but there is an overriding need to provide homes to meet all needs and means. The preferred option, therefore, is a combination of all the options tested – to make provision for a balance of new housing to ensure an appropriate mix of size, type and tenure with regard to the Housing Needs Study and community aspirations.

<u>Providing more affordable homes</u>

5.3.4 Given that the provision of affordable housing is a priority, the following options on how best to achieve an increase in provision were identified:

    a.   Require its provision on small to medium sized sites as well as on larger sites.
    b.   Increase the percentage of affordable housing on sites where it is required to be provided.
    c.   Develop larger greenfield sites where there are likely to be greater opportunities to provide more affordable housing.

The Core Strategy will set out strategic policy rather than detailed policy. The provision of affordable housing had already been identified as a priority for the Core Strategy through the Housing Needs Study and public consultation – it is also a priority of the Community Plan (Community Strategy) and Corporate Plan as well as national, regional and county policy.

The options identified above look at different ways of achieving more affordable housing, which will be taken forward in the more detailed Affordable Housing DPD following the adoption of the Core Strategy. The sustainability appraisal illustrates that there is little to choose between options a and b, which both seek to increase provision on small to medium sites. Although option c was rejected as the least sustainable it may have a role to play in providing affordable housing for villages should it prove difficult to identify sites within villages where a need has been demonstrated.

In reality the affordable housing policy is likely to combine options a and b to seek to achieve the aim of providing more affordable housing. Option c cannot be rejected outright at this stage despite its conflict with the aims of safeguarding the natural environment and making the best use of previously developed land because of the importance of ensuring housing provision to meet local needs.

<u>Infrastructure</u>

5.3.5 The following options were identified as reasonable alternatives with the aim of ensuring that necessary infrastructure, services and community facilities are provided:

    a.   Continue to require developers to contribute towards the cost of provision only when specific facilities are needed to support that development.
    b.   Require developers to contribute towards the overall cost of providing infrastructure and services each time a house or commercial site is developed.
    c.   Withhold planning permission where infrastructure and service provision is inadequate.

One of the greatest concerns is that the provision of infrastructure, services and community facilities will not be able to keep pace with development, partly due to lack of money.

Sustainability appraisal identified option b as the clear favourite, outperforming options a and c when measured against the sustainability objectives. Evidence shows that in Mole Valley the majority of housing development takes place on small sites which currently tend to contribute very little towards the provision of infrastructure, services and community facilities since it is difficult to pinpoint the need for these generated by the development itself. The cumulative effect of such development, however, does generate a need. Requiring developers to contribute each time a site is developed is regarded as a more effective way of funding any necessary supporting infrastructure.

Option c was rejected because it would effectively stall development, thus failing to meet key Core Strategy objectives to make adequate provision for housing and employment needs and having a negative effect on social sustainability objectives.

Traffic congestion

5.3.6   For the purposes of preparing the Core Strategy, the following different options to address the traffic impact of new development on the road network were identified:

a.   Allow new development, including new homes, to be built without providing any car parking.
b.   Allow new development providing more jobs only where it is accessible by public transport or where there are arrangements to reduce travel by car, such as car sharing, bus links to railway stations and parking restrictions.

Most transport issues and objectives will be addressed by the Highway Authority, Surrey County Council, through the Local Transport Plan. However, the Core Strategy has a role to play in the management of the traffic impact of new development.

The sustainability appraisal showed that restricting car parking on new developments (option a) might have adverse economic effects through limiting the travel opportunities of residents and acting as a disincentive to employers, since in a relatively rural District like Mole Valley access in rural areas may require car use. This option, on its own, was rejected.

Testing option b revealed that residents might still be restricted in their employment opportunities by lack of travel choice, although this option was clearly the more sustainable of the two. It does rely on the assumption that measures will be put in place to improve accessibility when new development is not on public transport routes, which needs to be translated into policy.

Maintaining a successful local economy

5.3.7   Taking into account all the information available, the following options for maintaining a successful local economy were identified:

a.   Continue the current policy of safeguarding existing suitably located employment sites from redevelopment to other uses.

b.   Relax the policy and aim to balance the number of jobs and resident workers in the District by providing new homes through redevelopment of some employment sites.

Option a performs well against economic sustainability criteria but its likely social and environmental impacts are less certain or negative. Option b would be likely to have beneficial social and environmental effects in the short to medium term, by providing more housing sites and ensuring good use of previously developed land. However, in the long term this may mean that there is inadequate provision of employment land and that greenfield sites may have to be sought to fill the gap. Public opinion is divided between the two options.

It is proposed to take the middle ground, using a criteria-based employment policy that will continue to protect suitably located employment land and allow for some to be released for mixed use redevelopment. Evidence shows that there is some spare capacity in employment land within the built-up areas and that mixed use redevelopment may not result in a net loss of jobs, and the sustainability appraisal shows that this may give good opportunities to provide new homes and affordable homes.

Please note: The South East Plan has since been progressed and provides further advice on employment land. The Council has had to incorporate these requirements into the Core Strategy and the approach is now one of flexibility whilst seeking to retain well located employment land. This is not considered to be fundamentally different from the options considered at this Preferred Options stage

5.3.8   In addition, looking at the possibility of using some existing employment land for housing, the following options addressing how future employment needs might be met were identified:

a.   Redevelop existing employment sites more intensively.
b.   Develop greenfield sites for employment use.

Option a is the much more sustainable option, making best use of employment land. Option b would be likely to have a significant adverse effect on the environment and is rejected for this reason and because it attracted little public support. This is carried forward in the preferred option to develop a policy as set out above at paragraph 5.3.7.

Shopping

5.3.9   The following alternative options for Dorking town centre were identified:

a.   Encourage further development in Dorking town centre to provide more shops, business and leisure activities.
b.   Encourage a change in the current mix of uses in Dorking town centre to provide more restaurants, business and leisure activities, instead of retail shop units.
c.   Keep Dorking town centre as it is – resist the loss of retail shop units to other uses.

See comments below at paragraph 5.3.11.

5.3.10 The following alternative options for Leatherhead town centre were identified:

a.   Encourage a change in the current mix of uses in Leatherhead town centre to provide more restaurants, business and leisure activities, instead of retail shop units

b.   Keep Leatherhead town centre as it is - resist any further loss of retail shop units to other uses

see comments below at paragraph 5.3.11.

5.3.11 The following options to sustain the role of the Local / District centres at Bookham, Fetcham and Ashtead were identified:

a.   Allow changes of use even if these result in the loss of retail shop units.

b.   Keep the local centres as they are - resist any further loss of retail shop units to other uses.

The sustainability appraisal showed that protecting a range of shops in the town and local centres would be likely to keep shops accessible to the local community (option c for Dorking and option b for Leatherhead and the local centres. This is the continuation of existing policy, which drew the most public support). However, a downturn in the retail trade could mean that shop units are left empty and that there are adverse economic effects of maintaining a rigid policy. Allowing changes of use from retail shops to other uses, whilst possibly benefiting the local economy, may fail to safeguard local accessibility to a range of shops and may have adverse environmental consequences of creating more noise, light and air pollution (the latter through increased need to travel).

The key objective is to ensure the continued vitality of the town and local centres, which will include the aim of retaining a range of retail shops. Retail studies of the town and local centres will need to be undertaken to establish how each can best maintain its vitality, and the extent of the central area where the loss of retail shops is to be resisted. These will complement the Market Town Healthchecks being undertaken for Leatherhead and Dorking and may give rise to the need for Area Action Plan DPDs to be taken forward.

Rural issues

5.3.12 The following alternative approaches to how the Council should deal with applications for the change of use of village shops were identified:

a.   Accept market forces and allow changes of use that result in the loss of village shops.

b.   Resist any further loss of village shops.

Option a, allowing the loss of village shops scores negatively against the sustainability objectives with the exception of the first, as this may provide additional housing units. It was also extremely unpopular with the community. It has therefore been rejected. Following public comment the aim to safeguard village shops has been augmented to include post offices and other facilities upon which the local community relies.

5.3.13 The following options for the location of new development to meet local needs were identified:

a.   Ensure that any new development required to meet local needs continues to be provided within villages.

b.   Allow villages to expand onto greenfield sites beyond their existing boundaries to accommodate new development required to meet local needs.

The sustainability appraisal showed that pursuing either of these options could have negative effects. Because Mole Valley's villages are mostly tightly constrained by the Green Belt, there is little opportunity to provide new development within them in the long term. This may have adverse social and economic effects as well as meaning that there is a greater need to travel, which might give rise to more air pollution. Allowing villages to expand, however, would have adverse environmental consequences. For this reason it is considered important to safeguard existing facilities, and to make provision for any additional facilities required first within villages if suitable sites are available. Should greenfield sites be needed to fulfil other Core strategy objectives then mitigation will be required (see section 5.5 below).

5.3.14   The following options for providing affordable housing in rural villages were identified:

a.   Continue to allow affordable housing as an exception to policy where local need can be demonstrated.
b.   Identify sites for affordable housing in villages as part of the Development Plan.

This issue is more about the way that affordable housing sites are identified rather than their location. Currently where a need is demonstrated, affordable housing sites can be identified as exceptions to policy within or on the edge of rural villages which may involve the use of greenfield sites if previously developed land is not available (option a). Identifying these sites as part of the land allocation process in the preparation of the LDF would give greater certainty and allow comparison between sites, allowing the selection of the most sustainable ones (option b). This met with a favourable response from the public. This might also involve the identification of greenfield sites. The preferred option is therefore to identify the provision of affordable housing sites at villages and this will be taken forward in the Land Allocations DPD if suitable sites are identified. Suitable mitigation will be required if greenfield sites are identified (see section 5.5 below).

5.4   Significant social, environmental and economic effects of the Core Strategy Preferred Options

Compliance with the SEA Directive

The Environmental Report should consider 'the likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors'. 'These effects should include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects'. (SEA Directive, Article 5(1), Annex I(f) and footnote).

5.4.1   This section considers the likely significant environmental, social and economic effects of the Core Strategy Preferred Options. The Preferred Options have been tested against the SA objectives. A full account of the appraisal is provided at Appendix 8. This includes consideration of the likely

significant effects on the environment, including the issues identified in the SEA Directive. The commentary includes consideration of secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects. Main effects are considered below.

<u>Natural environment</u>

5.4.2   Goal A: To safeguard and enhance the highly attractive natural environment.
- Make provision for new development on previously developed land within existing built-up areas. In the event that this source of land is insufficient to meet the requirements of the South East Plan, the most suitable and sustainable sites on the edge of the main built-up areas might need to be identified for development.
- Safeguard high quality landscapes of designated national importance.
- Safeguard designated sites and areas of natural, ecological and historic importance.
- Address the quality of landscape in the countryside and on the urban fringe through development control and countryside management.
- Encourage rural biodiversity.

Ensuring that new building takes place on previously developed land wherever possible will safeguard the natural environment, is in accordance with European, national, regional, county and local policy. This option was favoured at the Issues and Options stage (see paragraph 5.3.2 above). Evidence shows that Mole Valley's housing requirement of 150 new dwellings per year established in the Surrey Structure Plan and 171 dwellings per year in the emerging South East Plan can be met by using previously developed land in the existing built-up areas. However should this requirement significantly increase, the Council would need to identify the most suitable and sustainable greenfield sites on the edge of the main built-up areas. (Please note the housing target within the South East Plan has now been increased to 188 dwellings per year.)

Key adverse environmental impacts can be avoided or addressed through more detailed assessment of any greenfield sites under consideration. Mitigation would be required if any greenfield sites are to be used (see section 5.5 below) to ensure that adverse effects on designated landscapes, sites and areas of natural, ecological and historic importance are minimised.

An emerging issue for Mole Valley is the inclusion of part of the north west corner of the built-up area of Bookham within the 5km zone of influence drawn by English Nature in its draft Delivery Plan relating to the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA). Wisley and Ockham Commons SSSIs, which are part of the European-designated SPA, lie outside the District. This may mean that mitigated open space is required if sites for housing development are identified in this part of the built-up area. Discussions are under way with English Nature concerning the SPA and also the District's European-designated Special Area of Conservation. This could be addressed in a Supplementary Planning Document on the SPA.

Please note: Since publication of the Sustainability Appraisal in 2006 Mole Valley has reached agreement with Natural England that the impact of the Core Strategy on the SPA is not significant, but the Council will consult with them on all residential applications that are within a 5km linear distance from the boundary of the SPA or within 5.2km travel distance by road to the boundary. This only effects a very small, mostly rural part of the District, that is not the focus for new development.

The Council will need to capitalise on opportunities to improve biodiversity and seek other benefits and mitigation through development, without compromising commercial viability.

Housing

5.4.3 Goal B: To provide homes to suit all needs and means.
- Meet the District's housing requirements, currently 171 new homes per year to 2026 in the emerging South East Plan (now amended to 188 homes p.a. in line with revised South East Plan)
- Make provision for affordable housing with regard to the Housing Needs Study and the overall regional target in the emerging South East Plan that 25% of all new housing should be social rented accommodation and 10% other forms of affordable housing (nb: The South East Plan now increases this to 40% affordable housing)
- Make provision for affordable rural housing on small-scale sites within or well related to villages where studies show it is needed.
- Make provision for accommodation to meet specific needs, including those of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Show People, with regard to emerging needs studies.
- Make provision for a balance of new housing to ensure an appropriate mix of size, type and tenure with regard to the Housing Needs Study and community aspirations.

A central aim of the Core Strategy, supported by national, regional and county policy, is to ensure that enough housing land is identified. Another is to ensure that the best use is made of previously developed land. Given the housing requirement identified in the South East Plan, long term delivery on sites within the built-up area is not a problem during the plan period providing sites can be identified. However, the Preferred Options acknowledge that if the housing requirement increases significantly then the use of greenfield sites on the edge of the main built-up areas may need to be considered (see above at paragraph 5.4.2). Greenfield sites are likely to be larger and may deliver more affordable housing than smaller sites.

Affordable housing policy will be taken forward in the Affordable Housing DPD with the aim of maximising provision and meeting identified needs. This will include the preferred option of making provision for affordable rural housing within or well related to villages where studies show that it is needed, which scores well against social sustainability objectives. However, where greenfield land is required, the sustainability appraisal shows that there will be negative environmental impacts. In this case mitigation will be required to ensure that the effects are minimised (see section 5.5 below).

Please note: At the time of preparing the Preferred Options document, it was anticipated that a separate more detailed Affordable Housing DPD would be prepared. The preferred option therefore reflected the need to take into account the Housing Needs Study and the overall regional target in the South East Plan. However, considerable further work has since been undertaken and these issues are now incorporated into the Core Strategy, a separate Affordable Housing DPD will therefore not be required.

Specific accommodation needs for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Show People will also be addressed by more detailed DPD policies and the allocation of sites once needs have been assessed through the completion of studies.

<u>Transport and accessibility</u>

5.4.4   Goal C: To improve transport and accessibility.
- Manage travel demand by only allowing larger new development schemes where they are easy to reach by public transport or where there are arrangements to reduce travel by car.

Many measures to improve travel choices, reduce the demand to travel by car and tackle congestion are set out in the Local Transport Plan (produced by Surrey County Council, which is the Highway Authority) and in the Community Plan (produced by the District and County Council and other public, private and voluntary sector partners on the Local Strategic Partnership). These included car-sharing schemes, Company Travel Plans, Demand Responsive Transport (Buses 4U) mopeds for young people to access work and school through the Wheels2Work and Wheels2Learn schemes, and taxi vouchers.

The Core Strategy focuses development in the existing built-up areas, where travel choices are greatest. However, without significant improvements to the public transport infrastructure and alternatives to the car such as those identified above, air and noise pollution levels may increase. This situation will need to be monitored.

<u>Built environment</u>

5.4.5   Goal D: To maintain and improve the built environment.
- Address design and layout, density, character and appearance of development, to ensure a high standard of design and good integration with the existing built environment, through strong core Development Control policies.
- Safeguard and enhance the District's built and cultural heritage and the historic environment.
- Safeguard and enhance public open spaces in the built-up areas.
- Encourage urban biodiversity through development schemes and enhancement of public open space.

The Preferred Options aim to recognise that there is a balance to be achieved between making the best use of urban land, involving higher density development, and ensuring that the built-up areas are attractive areas to live, work and visit. Development Control policies will be needed to support this. They may also be important in maximising opportunities for enhancing public open space and urban biodiversity through new development.

Design in the built environment will also be important in minimising the effects of potential increases in light pollution highlighted by sustainability appraisal. The integration of traditional design with design features to increase energy efficiency and prepare for the impacts of climate change and improve accessibility will need to be addressed.

<u>Infrastructure, services and community facilities</u>

5.4.6   Goal E: To ensure the provision of adequate infrastructure, services and community facilities to meet current and future requirements.
- Require developers to contribute towards the overall cost of providing infrastructure, services and community facilities each time a house or commercial site is developed.

- Safeguard against the loss of local shops, post offices and other facilities to other uses, particularly in the rural villages where the community relies upon them.
- Safeguard existing community, sport and recreation facilities and provide additional facilities where there is a need.

Current Council policy is to require a financial contribution for improvements to infrastructure, services and community facilities for major developments as and when a need is identified.

However, there are concerns that the cumulative impact of dwellings built on small and medium sites is putting existing infrastructure and services under pressure, and that there is no means to engineer contributions towards the cost of addressing this. Although the Planning Gain Supplement proposed by the Government may help to finance vital infrastructure to support growing communities, this is not yet Government policy. The Preferred Option therefore proposes the use of a tariff based approach to be taken forward in a Planning Contributions DPD requiring a contribution to be made by all housing and commercial development. This scores well in sustainability appraisal. A balance will need to be achieved to ensure that the viability of sites is not adversely affected.

Please note: Since the publication of this Appraisal the Council in collaboration with the other Districts in Surrey and the County Council have prepared 'The Planning Obligations and Infrastructure – Code of Practice'. This code sets out an interim system for the collection of financial contributions, which enhances the authority's ability to collect and make use of S106 contributions.

As well as ensuring provision, the Council will need to safeguard existing services and community facilities to maintain a good range of accessible services and facilities.

Safer and stronger communities

5.4.7   Goal F: To ensure safer and stronger communities.
- Minimise the numbers at risk from flooding and other effects of climate change.
- Minimise the numbers at risk from environmental pollution.
- Address improvements to quality of life for particular communities through Area Action Plans where appropriate.
- The Community Safety Strategy (produced by the District and County Councils, the Police, Fire and Rescue Service and Primary Care Trust which make up the Community Safety Partnership) seeks to reduce crime and minimise the fear of crime.

These Preferred Options arose from Core Strategy objectives and sustainability objectives. There were no realistic alternatives identified at Issues and Options stage, since Government policy requires the Council and its partners to address these objectives.

The Preferred Options score positively when assessed against the sustainability objectives. However, one or two potential conflicts were identified through sustainability appraisal. For example, improving lighting may make some areas seem safer, but may increase light pollution, particularly if this involves lighting previously dark villages. Also, employment opportunities and access to them are important for safer and stronger communities which

mean that skills and access to jobs may need to be addressed. The situation will need to be monitored in relation to particular communities.

<u>Local economy</u>

5.4.8   Goal G: To maintain a successful local economy.
- Safeguard the most suitably located employment sites and make provision for the needs of local businesses through ensuring the provision of a range of employment sites.
- Make provision for mixed use redevelopment of some employment sites, which may provide more opportunities to build new homes and affordable homes.
- Support rural diversification (farmers diversifying the range of activities on their land in order to sustain an income from it).
- Support the contribution that tourism makes to the local economy.

The Preferred Options take forward the favoured options considered at Issues and Options stage. Evidence shows that there is some spare capacity in employment land within the built-up areas and that mixed use redevelopment may not result in a net loss of jobs, and the sustainability appraisal shows that this may give good opportunities to provide new homes and affordable homes. Mixed use development may give opportunities to address causes and impacts of climate change, and be of a scale to enable energy and water efficiencies to be achieved and renewable energy used. Sustainable construction will need to be promoted.

Please note: The South East Plan has since been progressed and provides further advice on employment land. The Council has had to incorporate these requirements into the Core Strategy and the approach is now one of flexibility whilst seeking to retain well located employment land. This is not considered to be fundamentally different from the options considered at this Preferred Options stage

In addition the Preferred Options identify the need to support rural diversification and tourism for their contribution to the local economy.

<u>Town and local centres</u>

5.4.9   Goal H: To ensure successful town and local centres.
- Ensure the vitality of town and local centres, including by resisting any further loss of retail shops within them.
- Address change through Town Centre Action Plans where appropriate.

These Preferred Options score well when tested against social and economic sustainability objectives, since they continue to focus retailing activity in central and accessible locations. However, there may be adverse environmental effects of concentration and continued success of centres without mitigation. For example, potential increases air and noise pollution will need to be addressed by encouraging people to access the centres by modes of transport other than the car.

<u>Land and natural resources</u>

5.4.10   Goal I: To use land and natural resources wisely.
- Make the best use of previously developed land.

- Promote energy and water efficiency and renewable energy through the design of new development.
- Promote waste minimisation and recycling.

This Preferred Option is largely a product of the process of sustainability appraisal, and the adoption of sustainability objectives as important Core Strategy objectives in their own right. Climate change is a global issue that is now high on the national, regional and local agenda. The policies developed from these Preferred Options will aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the District and conserve natural resources including land and water. They will be important in achieving sustainable development within Mole Valley. Not surprisingly, they score well against the sustainability objectives themselves with the proviso that the Core Strategy focuses on meeting the needs of development within the existing built-up areas.

5.5 Proposed mitigation measures

Compliance with the SEA Directive

The Environmental Report should provide information on 'the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme' (SEA Directive, Article 5 and Annex I(g)).

5.5.1 This section considers how the Core Strategy Preferred Options can be adapted and supplemented to ensure that as many benefits as possible can be delivered by the policies yet to be drafted. The Council followed Government guidance in drawing up the Core Strategy Preferred Options and concentrated on seeking to establish the right strategy for Mole Valley before focusing on the policies to deliver that strategy. At this stage, therefore, no policies had been drafted. This meant that there was scope to build the proposed mitigation measures identified below into the development of the Core Strategy policies.

Natural environment

5.5.2 The Core Strategy Preferred Options focus new development within the existing built-up area.

However, it is acknowledged that in certain circumstances, the use of greenfield sites may have to be considered in order to provide sufficient land for housing and affordable housing. To mitigate this, greenfield sites would have to be carefully assessed to ensure that the most sensitive sites for biodiversity and natural, archaeological and historic features are protected and the most sustainable sites used. There may be some opportunity for enhancing biodiversity through new development.

Also, the development of greenfield sites may increase light pollution and widen its effects. Mitigation to reduce effects through the sensitive design of lighting schemes will be required.

Housing

5.5.3 Sustainable construction principles will need to be adopted to ensure that new development will minimise adverse effects on pollution levels through making

best use of natural resources. Buildings will also need to be 'climate proofed' to withstand flooding and extreme weather events.

The supply of affordable housing units on all housing sites will need to be maximised to support the objective of making the best use of urban land, thereby safeguarding greenfield sites from development. See above mitigation measures in respect of greenfield sites under natural environment (at 5.5.2).

Transport and accessibility

5.5.4   A balance will need to be struck between the Preferred Options to limit parking and maintain accessibility for all. The success of this approach relies on providing convenient and attractive alternatives to the car and persuading the public to use them.

Built environment

5.5.5   The Preferred Options for the built environment include safeguarding and enhancing the District's built and cultural heritage and the historic environment. Policies and design guidance will need to be developed to ensure that this does not prevent all development from taking place in parts of the built-up area, and that opportunities for sustainable construction are not unduly limited.

The Core Strategy also seeks to safeguard existing open space in the built-up areas and ensure that the provision of open space in appropriate new developments is created.

Infrastructure, services and community facilities

5.5.6   Requiring contributions towards infrastructure, services and community facilities could reduce the scope for renewable energy technologies and energy and water conservation measures to be introduced in new developments. To mitigate this, consideration could be given to a staged tariff rather than a flat-rate tariff per new dwelling to offer subsidies where these measures were proposed.

Safer and stronger communities

5.5.7   Minimising those at risk of contaminated land sites may point towards use of greenfield sites rather than previously developed land in built-up areas, but this would compromise other objectives. Remediation of contaminated land will be required and policies need to encourage this.

Minimising those at risk from air pollution emissions requires mitigation in particular circumstances, thereby reducing the need to travel by car to and from new housing and commercial developments.

Minimising those at risk of noise pollution requires mitigation in particular circumstances, for example, around Gatwick Airport and major roads where noise levels are particularly high.

Local economy

5.5.8   A successful local economy may not necessarily encourage sustainable construction and use of resources. There will be a need to promote re-use and

recycling of materials, waste minimisation and efficient use of energy and water.

<u>Town and local centres</u>

5.5.9   There may be adverse environmental effects of concentration and continued success of centres without mitigation. For example, potential increases air and noise pollution will need to be addressed by encouraging people to access the centres by modes of transport other than the car.

5.6   Uncertainties and risks

5.6.1   There is an inherent uncertainty about some of the predicted impacts of the SA process. This is because it involves making judgements based on sometimes limited or inadequate baseline data, for example, the limited local data available on biodiversity and the questionable reliability of the Experian employment forecasts. The SA process seeks to limit this risk by using and maintaining up-to-date and relevant baseline data, and by consulting specialist organisations to seek advice and help in obtaining it.

5.6.2   Monitoring will enable actual impacts to be measured against predicted impacts. It will also identify any significant adverse impacts that require remedial action as well as provide information on how well the Core Strategy is performing. It may be difficult to identify exactly how well Core Strategy policies are performing when many factors other than the policy itself may have a bearing on environmental, social and economic impacts. The following section (section 6) addresses proposals for monitoring.

6. IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 Links to other tiers of plans and programmes and the project level

6.1.1 Following consultation on the Core Strategy Preferred Options, the Council developed the Core Strategy policies. Once adopted, the Core Strategy will provide a framework for taking decisions on development proposals and the basis for further Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents.

6.1.2 These documents will be linked to each other and other plans and programmes such as:

- Mole Valley Community Plan (Community Strategy)
- Parish Plans
- Surrey Community Strategy
- Surrey County Council Local Transport Plan
- Surrey County Council Minerals and Waste Development Framework
- The South East Plan

6.2 Proposals for monitoring

> **Compliance with the SEA Directive**
>
> Article 10 of the SEA Directive requires monitoring of significant environmental impacts to identify at an early stage unforeseen adverse effects and be able to undertake appropriate remedial action.

6.2.1 Following the Core Strategy Preferred Options consultation, the Council developed Core Strategy policies and targets. It has also identified indicators to measure the performance of the Core Strategy policies through the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) and help identify whether any remedial action is required to improve performance.

6.2.2 The AMR will contain a bundle of core and local indicators to monitor significant environmental, social and economic effects of both the Core Strategy and the Mole Valley Community Plan (Community Strategy). This will include reporting on the sustainability indicators where known.

6.2.3 For a number of the sustainability indicators identified, data is not yet available, is limited or inadequate. For these reasons and because this is the first time that the inclusion of sustainability indicators in the AMR, has been proposed, the indicators may need to be amended, replaced or deleted over time. Following the adoption of the Core Strategy the Council will produce an adoption statement setting out how the findings of the Sustainability Appraisal have been taken into account and information on how monitoring will be carried out during implementation of the Plan. This will take on board any revisions to the Core Strategy made by the Independent Inspector and any comments made on monitoring and indicators made during the various revisions of the Sustainability Appraisal work.