

Stratford-on-Avon District Core Strategy

Justification for the Preferred Development Strategy

1. Introduction

A fundamental aspect of the Local Development Framework process is that the approach to future development in the District should reflect the character and needs of the area and be based on clear evidence relating to how the area looks and functions.

Both of these underlying considerations must be ingrained in a comprehensive assessment of the various options that are available for meeting the development requirements of the District.

This assessment is at the heart of the need to carry out a sustainability appraisal of all Development Plan Documents (DPDs). It is geared to securing the fundamental objective of the planning system which is to facilitate the delivery of the Government's objective of achieving sustainable development.

Sustainable development is defined in the West Midlands Regional Sustainable Development Framework as being about 'achieving a better quality of life for everybody without compromising the quality of life of future generations. A sustainable society is one that uses resources efficiently and sensibly; treats the environment responsibly and sensitively; meets social needs in a way that is fair and enables people to take part in and influence decisions that affect them; and where economic success is a means to maximising wellbeing rather than an end in itself.'

It is often difficult to balance the potential and real tensions that exist between social, economic and environmental objectives. Sustainability appraisal is a means of ensuring that a good balance is achieved between the three dimensions of sustainable development. It enables a critical assessment of each policy or development proposal and the contribution it makes towards sustainable development. It also allows any weaknesses in them to be identified and mitigation measures introduced to make them as sustainable as they can possibly be. Furthermore, it enables these considerations to be taken into account at the early stages of the development plan document process.

2. Characteristics of Stratford District

In considering the future of the District it is important to establish the distinct functions that its different parts have now and should have in the future. There is a clear and well-established arrangement to the way in which the District is perceived and performs:

- Stratford-upon-Avon is the main town, providing a wide range of shops, services and jobs for its own population and quite a large rural area around it, as well as having a national and international role as a tourist attraction.
- A number of smaller rural towns and large villages each provide a good range of shops and facilities for themselves and the local area.
- An extensive swathe of open countryside covers most of the District, within which numerous villages, hamlets, farms and other activities sit and operate.

While it is necessary to assess the validity and effects of other patterns of future development in the District, there is no obvious reason why this existing pattern should

be called into question to the extent that an entirely different approach should be taken. The District Council therefore proposes to use it as the basis for the Spatial Strategy.

It is clearly consistent with the approach taken in the Regional Spatial Strategy. This identifies Stratford-upon-Avon as a strategic centre for shopping, tourism and other forms of commercial development. Urban areas such as Stratford-upon-Avon are capable of creating balanced opportunities for housing and employment and support a wide range of services.

The RSS also identifies a role for smaller market towns and comparable settlements in supporting the regeneration of rural areas and serving their hinterlands. As such, they can be a focus for modest housing and employment development and provide a variety of local services, although it is essential to maintain their individual distinctiveness and character.

For the remaining villages in the District, the RSS acknowledges their essential role in maintaining and enhancing the rural way of life. Consideration should be given to the extent to which sustainable development, which is appropriate in scale and nature, would enable villages to remain viable.

3. Assessment of Development Options

Deciding where development should take place in the District in the future is probably the most challenging part of the task of producing the Core Strategy. This is particularly the case because there is more scope to decide locally this time around. Whereas in the past the Structure Plan has expected most development to be in Stratford-upon-Avon, the Regional Spatial Strategy is less specific. But it is necessary to justify the approach taken based on the character of the District and show how the chosen option would work better than the other options available.

The preparation of the Core Strategy has already gone through two consultation stages to inform the production of the current version.

(a) Issues & Options (May 2007)

A number of options were identified at this stage for consideration and comment:

1. Concentrate development in and on the edge of Stratford-upon-Avon
2. Concentrate development in and on the edge of the larger rural town and villages
3. Spread development around most towns and villages throughout the District
4. Focus development in the form of a new settlement or as a major expansion of an existing settlement
5. Locate development along main public transport routes (existing or potential)
6. Focus development on large brownfield (previously developed) land in the countryside

It was not appropriate or necessary at the Issues & Options stage to identify actual areas of land that could be made available for housing and employment development under each of the options.

However, it was acknowledged that the likely consequences of each option would have to be assessed. The following matters would have to be included in such an assessment:

- The availability of infrastructure, such as water supply and drainage, and whether the necessary improvements can be made.
- The need to protect and conserve important resources, such as water, habitats and heritage.

- The availability of services, such as shops and schools, and the scope to provide new ones.
- The impact of development on the character of the area and opportunities for enhancement.
- The effects of development on existing communities, both positive and negative.
- The scope to reduce the need to travel and to increase walking, cycling and the use of public transport.
- The manner in which the needs of residents and businesses throughout the District would be met.

An analysis of the responses to questions posed about the location of development in the Issues & Options consultation document is provided below:

Which of the options is the most appropriate for locating housing development?

| Options | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Other |
|------------------------|----|----|----|---|----|----|-------|
| 1 st Choice | 25 | 19 | 41 | 3 | 5 | 8 | 31 |
| 2 nd Choice | 1 | 9 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 6 | 1 |
| 3 rd Choice | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 |
| Total | 26 | 28 | 42 | 9 | 10 | 17 | 32 |

Which of the options is the most appropriate for locating employment development?

| Options | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Other |
|------------------------|----|----|----|---|----|----|-------|
| 1 st Choice | 19 | 22 | 23 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 24 |
| 2 nd Choice | 0 | 8 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| 3 rd Choice | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| Total | 19 | 30 | 25 | 7 | 10 | 10 | 24 |

At this stage, there was a clear preference expressed for a wide dispersal of future housing development across most settlements in the District. The situation was less clear-cut for employment development, with a concentration on the larger rural settlements in the District gaining slightly more support than a more dispersed approach.

(b) Draft Core Strategy (October 2009)

A Sustainability Appraisal was published to accompany the first draft of the Core Strategy itself. This incorporated an assessment of the six development options identified at the Issues & Options stage.

Each of the six options for locating future development was assessed against the wide range of factors identified in the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report.¹ No other discrete, reasonable option was put forward at the Issues & Options stage that merited further consideration.

The assessment is set out in **Appendix A** at the back of this document.

¹ Sustainability Appraisal of Development Plan Documents Scoping Report – Stratford-on-Avon District Council, March 2007

The overall findings for each option at that time were as follows:

1. The most polarised option. Overall it is the most sustainable but raises serious concerns over impact on the town's character and assets. Option 3 would involve some development related to the town in any case.
2. Portrays neither significant strengths nor weaknesses. Option 3 would also involve some development related to larger rural settlements.
3. The favoured option based on the consultation process but offers less scope to reduce the use of the private car. Provides greater scope to meet needs where they arise and to support those who are disadvantaged. If this approach is chosen as the Preferred Option, consideration should be given to focusing on settlements that can support local facilities (existing or potential) and/or have good access, preferably by modes other than the private car, to nearby settlements that have such facilities.
4. Little support expressed for this option through the consultation process. It would not appear to be appropriate given the character, needs and circumstances faced by Stratford District. No clear strategic housing role has been identified for such an approach.
5. Provides opportunity to locate development where it can reduce reliance on the private car. May not be a viable option in its own right but could form a component of the Preferred Option.
6. Raises major concerns over whether such sites are in appropriate locations to achieve other important objectives, such as access to services and reducing the need to travel. The identification of a specific rural brownfield site for development would need to be consistent with the Preferred Option or be fully justified based on its individual circumstances.

Justification for the Preferred Option

Overall, a dispersed approach is considered to be the most appropriate compared with all other reasonable options available; this is known as the 'preferred option'. This includes an element of many of the other options rather than concentrating most development in a particular type of settlement or location. However, the manner in which this approach is put into effect should reflect and be sensitive to the specific circumstances of each settlement.

The preferred option incorporates the following components:

- A significant amount of development within and on the edge of Stratford-upon-Avon, being the largest and most sustainable location within the District, but of a scale that is appropriate to the size and character of the town, and which can be accommodated by existing infrastructure or through improvements that can be delivered.
- A significant amount of development in the larger rural towns and villages, but with a varying amount in each reflecting the specific constraints and opportunities that apply and the importance of retaining their individual character and distinctiveness.
- An allowance for some development in the smaller villages, to provide scope for the needs of these communities to be met and to help sustain the services they support.
- The approach taken should mean that most development would be well-related to public transport corridors in that the most frequent services link the larger settlements within and outside the District.
- Scope for some housing development to be provided on the large rural brownfield sites specified in the Core Strategy, based on meeting local need and related to the scale of employment provided on these sites.

It is appropriate to focus on the role of the larger rural settlements as a way of ensuring the effective provision of public services and commercial facilities across the District. While it does not want those limited facilities that remain in villages to decline further, it is important to ensure that a wide range of provision is maintained in larger centres that are relatively close at hand and accessible.

Scope should be given for smaller communities to meet their own needs in order to help sustain their future. To assist this process, it may be necessary to be more pro-active in working with communities to help meet their needs. However, it is important to make sure that the scale of development in these locations, both individually and cumulatively, does not undermine other aspects of the strategy.

Reasons for rejecting other Options

The following reasons are given for rejecting the other options:

Option 1: Concentrating an excessive amount of development in Stratford-upon-Avon would be harmful to the character and setting of the town. There are also significant infrastructure constraints that would have to be overcome to the satisfaction of various agencies.

Option 2: Concentrating development on larger rural settlements would also be harmful to their character. There is insufficient capacity for achieving the required scale of development in these settlements in a satisfactory manner.

Option 4: The new settlement approach would not be consistent with meeting local needs where they arise. It is likely to come into the reckoning only if the housing requirement for Stratford District is increased significantly to the extent that the scale of growth could not be met satisfactorily in existing settlements.

Option 5: There is insufficient high quality public transport routes across the District to make this a viable approach in itself. The preferred option provides scope to improve the linkages between villages and the larger settlements in and close to the District.

Option 6: There are major concerns as to whether large rural brownfield sites are in appropriate locations to achieve other important objectives. They tend to be some distance from existing services and facilities, would be heavily dependent on car-borne transport and not meet the needs of people and businesses in an effective manner.

4. Consultation Core Strategy (February 2010)

The first draft of the Core Strategy was produced in the context of the Regional Spatial Strategy Phase Two Draft Preferred Option submitted to the Secretary of State by the Regional Assembly in December 2007. This put forward a development requirement for Stratford District during the period 2006-2026 of 5,600 dwellings and 68 hectares of employment land.

The current version of the Core Strategy is based on the Panel Report into the Examination in Public into the RSS Phase Two Revision published in September 2009. This recommended that the housing requirement for Stratford District should be increased to 7,500 dwellings, while maintaining the employment land target at 68 hectares.

Consideration has been given to whether the increased housing requirement justifies or necessitates a reassessment of the relative merits of the various options previously identified.

It has been concluded that this is not the case, particularly given the findings of the Panel, which itself has taken into account the Sustainability Appraisal produced to inform the RSS Phase Two Revision. The Panel stated that 'a figure of 7,500 dwellings could be justified as backed by sustainability appraisals already undertaken or by local plan policies previously adopted.' (para.8.62), and that Stratford-upon-Avon 'would represent the optimum location for substantial volumes of additional affordable housing' (para.8.64).

On the matter of new settlements, the Panel found that around 7,500 dwellings could be provided satisfactorily in Stratford District without having recourse to a new settlement. The Panel was not convinced that the Middle Quinton proposal was appropriate to meet the higher housing requirement it identified for the District. Neither did it express any support for the potential of a new settlement put forward by the owners of the Harbury Estate.

In considering the most appropriate means of meeting the 1,900 dwelling increase in the requirement, the current version of the Core Strategy puts forward the following approach:

- An additional 800 dwellings in Stratford-upon-Avon given its status as by far the largest town in the District. It also supports the widest range of services and jobs and is the most accessible settlement in the District.
- An allowance of 950 dwellings to be provided in a range of settlements to be known as Local Service Villages. This will help to support the dispersal of development to smaller settlements which forms a key component of the preferred dispersal option.
- Scope for a modest amount of housing development on large rural brownfield sites based on meeting local need and/or associated with other uses on the site.

For the reasons given above, a further version of the Assessment of Development Options has not been produced to accompany this stage of the Core Strategy process.

It is not apparent that there are overriding constraints to achieving the Preferred Option for meeting the development requirements for the District as currently known. However, if this requirement changes as a result of the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to the Draft RSS Phase Two Revision, or its subsequent approval, the situation will have to be reviewed. The same will apply if significant constraints emerge relating to the delivery of the Preferred Option.

In any case, a comprehensive Sustainability Appraisal will be published to accompany the Proposed Submission version of the Core Strategy.

Assessment of Options for Locating Future Development

Notes:

1. Assessment is based on housing and business development together with associated infrastructure, facilities and accessibility
2. The options assessed are those identified in the Issues & Options consultation document. Responses to this specified other options which are set out below, together with a comment on why they need not be covered in this assessment:
 - i. various combinations of these options – assessment could conclude that a mix of options is appropriate
 - ii. brownfield sites in towns and villages – forms a component of many of the options identified
 - iii. based on local choice/preference – ongoing consultation process will provide such an input to the assessment
 - iv. based on local needs – meeting local needs is the overriding strategic objective of future development in Stratford District in accordance with the emerging RSS Revision and should therefore be the basis of the assessment
 - v. based on availability of infrastructure and services – this is a key factor in assessing options in any case.
 - vi. avoiding further development in Stratford town – this may be the outcome of the assessment but it should not be pre-judged
 - vii. no development at all – not a reasonable option given the strategic context set by the emerging RSS Revision
3. The following symbols have been used to assess each factor against the options:

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| + positive impact | ++ more positive compared with a positive impact for other options |
| _ negative impact | _ _ more negative compared with a negative impact for other options |
| o neutral impact | / not applicable |

| Factors | 1. Concentration in/on edge of Stratford-upon-Avon town | 2. Concentration in/on edge of larger rural settlements | 3. Dispersal around most towns and villages throughout District | 4. Focus on a new settlement or major expansion of existing settlement | 5. Focus on main public transport routes (existing and potential) | 6. Focus on large brownfield sites in rural areas throughout District | Comments |
|--|--|--|--|---|--|--|--|
| Compatibility with national, regional and local context | | | | | | | |
| Consistency with national policy | o | o | o | o | o | o | National planning policy does not rule out any of the options being applicable/appropriate to a specific area. |

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|--|----|---|----|-----|---|---|--|
| Consistency with regional policy | ++ | + | - | - | + | - | RSS Revision indicates that development should tend to be concentrated in larger settlements. Scope to maximise use of public transport is emphasised. No provision is made for new settlements although not specifically ruled out. |
| Consistency with Community Plan and Corporate Strategy | o | o | o | o | o | o | Neither document deals specifically with the preferred location of development. |
| Consistency with response to Issues & Options consultation document | + | - | ++ | -- | - | + | Wide dispersal was favoured option; focus on a new settlement was least supported. |
| Developing thriving sustainable communities | | | | | | | |
| Participation – scope to contribute to decision-making | / | / | / | / | / | / | |
| Crime – reduce crime/anti-social behaviour and fear of crime | ++ | + | - | [+] | - | - | Concentration of development in larger settlements likely to be served better by police. New settlement would not achieve this initially. |
| Education – provide facilities for all stages of life | ++ | + | - | [+] | - | - | Concentration of development in larger settlements likely to be served by a wider range of education facilities. New settlement would not achieve this initially. |
| Health – provide facilities and | ++ | + | - | [+] | - | - | Concentration of development in larger settlements likely to be served by a wider range of |

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|--|-----|---|----|-----|---|---|---|
| promote healthy lifestyles | | | | | | | health facilities. New settlement would not achieve this initially. |
| Poverty – tackle disadvantage | + | + | ++ | – | + | – | Development in existing settlements likely to be more effective in meeting needs. |
| Access – improve services and opportunities | ++ | + | + | [+] | + | – | Development in settlements with widest range of services likely to provide greatest access to opportunities. New settlement would not achieve this initially. |
| Culture & recreation – increase participation | ++ | + | – | [+] | + | – | Concentration of development in larger settlements likely to be served by a wider range of leisure facilities. New settlement would not achieve this initially. |
| Housing – provide good quality and affordable homes | + | + | + | + | + | + | All options are capable of achieving such housing. |
| People – balance needs of residents and visitors | [-] | o | o | o | o | o | Large-scale development in Stratford-upon-Avon could impinge on experience of visitors but this need not be negative. |
| Protecting and enhancing the environment | | | | | | | |
| Historic and cultural heritage – preserve and manage assets | – | o | o | o | o | o | Large-scale development in Stratford-upon-Avon could place further pressure on town's historic features. |
| Landscape and townscape – | – | o | o | o | o | o | Large-scale development in Stratford-upon-Avon could |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|---|-------|---|-----|---|
| maintain character and appearance | | | | | | | have a detrimental effect on town's character and setting. |
| Environmental assets – preserve natural and built features | – | o | o | o | o | o | Large-scale development in Stratford-upon-Avon could have a detrimental effect on such features. |
| Biodiversity – protect and enhance species and habitats | o | o | o | o | o | o | Development in any location should avoid harm to habitats and be used as an opportunity to enhance biodiversity. |
| Land use – optimise use of brownfield land | – | – | – | + [+] | – | ++ | Insufficient brownfield land within existing settlements to meet development requirements. New settlement could utilise such land. |
| Urban development – achieve high quality environments | o | o | o | o | o | o | Development in any location should create a high quality environment. |
| Stewardship – encourage local responsibility | / | / | / | / | / | / | |
| Pollution - minimise air, water and soil pollution | – | o | o | o | o | o | Development in any location should minimise such risks. Air quality in certain parts of Stratford-upon-Avon is poor and further development could exacerbate situation. |
| Climate change – minimise District's contribution | ++ | + | – | [+] | + | [+] | Concentration of development in larger settlements and/or with provision of good public transport would help to reduce energy consumption. New |

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|---|----|---|---|-----|----|-----|--|
| | | | | | | | settlement or use of brownfield sites in rural areas would have to support a wide range of facilities and jobs and have good public transport links to towns to satisfy this factor. |
| Flood risk – avoid increasing risk | o | o | o | o | o | o | Development in any location should avoid flood risk areas and not exacerbate flood risk elsewhere. Stage One Strategic Flood Risk Assessment does not rule out any of the options on these grounds. |
| Ensuring prudent and efficient use of natural resources | | | | | | | |
| Energy – increase efficiency and use of renewable sources | o | o | o | o | o | o | Development in any location should incorporate energy reduction/renewable energy features. |
| Conservation – reduce consumption of natural resources | o | o | o | o | o | o | Development in any location should conserve features. |
| Standards – improve design and construction of buildings | o | o | o | o | o | o | Development in any location should achieve high standards. |
| Planning – promote sustainable locations and effective use of infrastructure | ++ | + | - | [+] | ++ | [-] | Choice of option should be based on maximising the scope to achieve a sustainable form of development in its widest sense, ie. in relation to economic, environmental and social factors, and be served by the necessary |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|---|-----|----|-----|---|
| | | | | | | | infrastructure. On balance, development in larger settlements and/or with provision of good public transport are most sustainable based on access to facilities and jobs. Brownfield sites in rural areas may have difficulty satisfying these criteria. New settlement would not achieve them initially. |
| Transport – encourage modal shift from use of private car | ++ | + | – | [+] | ++ | [+] | Development in larger settlements and/or with provision of good public transport provides greatest scope to reduce use of private car. New settlement or use of brownfield sites in rural areas would have to support a wide range of facilities and jobs and have good public transport links to towns to satisfy this factor. |
| Waste – reduce consumption and increase re-use and recycling | o | o | o | o | o | o | Development in any location should seek to achieve reduction in waste. |
| Local sourcing – encourage local supply of goods and materials | o | o | o | o | o | o | Development in any location should seek to encourage use of local goods and materials. |
| Developing a flourishing, diverse and stable economy | | | | | | | |
| Growth – achieve sustainable economic growth | + | + | + | – | + | – | Scope for business development in existing settlements and/or in relation to good public transport likely to be most sustainable. |

| | | | | | | | |
|--|-----|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| Employment – provide opportunities suited to workforce | o | o | + | o | o | o | Business development in any location could help to provide jobs. On balance, a wide distribution of business development is likely to provide a broader choice of local job opportunities. |
| Investment – assist prosperity | o | o | o | o | o | o | Business development in any location could support the local economy. |
| Skills – engage in learning and skills development | o | o | o | o | o | o | Business development in any location could help to develop skills. |
| Innovation – encourage culture of enterprise | o | o | o | o | o | o | Business development in any location could facilitate innovation. |
| Technology – promote new technologies | o | o | o | o | o | o | Business development in any location could provide scope for new technology-based companies. |
| Responsibility – involve local organisations and agencies | / | / | / | / | / | / | |
| Tourism – enhance visitor experience | [-] | o | o | o | o | o | Large-scale development in Stratford-upon-Avon could impinge on experience of visitors to town but this need not be negative. |

Factors that have a significant bearing on comparative performance of options for locating development

Note: best and worst performing option is in comparison with all other options. Where performance is comparable with one other option the term 'joint' is used.

| | 1. Concentration in/on edge of Stratford-upon- Avon town | 2. Concentration in/on edge of larger rural settlements | 3. Dispersal around most towns and villages throughout District | 4. Focus on a new settlement or major expansion of existing settlement | 5. Focus on main public transport routes (existing and potential) | 6. Focus on large brownfield sites in rural areas throughout District |
|-------------------------|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| Positive factors | Best performing option for the following factors: - consistency with regional policy - reduce crime and fear of crime - provision of education facilities - provision of health facilities - access to services and opportunities - provision of leisure facilities - climate change - sustainable location (joint) - modal shift (joint) | Best performing option for the following factors: None | Best performing option for the following factors: - most popular in consultation response - tackling disadvantage - employment opportunities | Best performing option for the following factors: None | Best performing option for the following factors: - sustainable location (joint) - modal shift (joint) | Best performing option for the following factors: - use of brownfield land |
| Negative factors | Worst performing option for the following factors: - potential impact on visitors - impact on heritage - impact on landscape and townscape - impact on environmental assets - air pollution | Worst performing option for the following factors: None | Worst performing option for the following factors: - provision of leisure facilities (joint) - modal shift | Worst performing option for the following factors: - least popular in consultation response - tackling disadvantage (joint) - sustainable economic growth (joint) | Worst performing option for the following factors: None | Worst performing option for the following factors: - tackling disadvantage (joint) - access to services - provision of leisure facilities (joint) - sustainable location and effective use of infrastructure |

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------|--|---|---|--|---|---|
| | | | | | | -sustainable economic growth (joint) |
| Conclusion | <p>The most polarised option. Overall it is the most sustainable but raises serious concerns over impact on the town's character and assets.</p> <p>Option 3 would involve some development related to town in any case.</p> | <p>Portrays neither significant strengths nor weaknesses.</p> <p>Option 3 would involve some development related to larger rural settlements in any case.</p> | <p>Favoured option based on consultation process but least scope to reduce use of private car.</p> <p>Provides scope to meet needs where they arise and to support those who are disadvantaged.</p> <p>If this approach is chosen as the Preferred Option, consideration should be given to focusing on settlements that can support local facilities (existing or potential) and/or have good access, preferably by modes other than the private car, to nearby settlements that have such facilities.</p> | <p>Little support expressed through consultation process.</p> <p>Would not appear to be appropriate given character, needs and circumstances faced by Stratford District.</p> <p>No clear strategic housing role has been defined for such a settlement.</p> | <p>Provides opportunity to locate development where it can reduce reliance on private car.</p> <p>May not be a viable option in its own right but could form a component of Preferred Option.</p> | <p>Raises major concerns over whether such sites are in appropriate locations to achieve other important objectives.</p> <p>Identification of a specific rural brownfield site for development would need to be consistent with Preferred Option or be otherwise fully justified based on its individual circumstances.</p> |