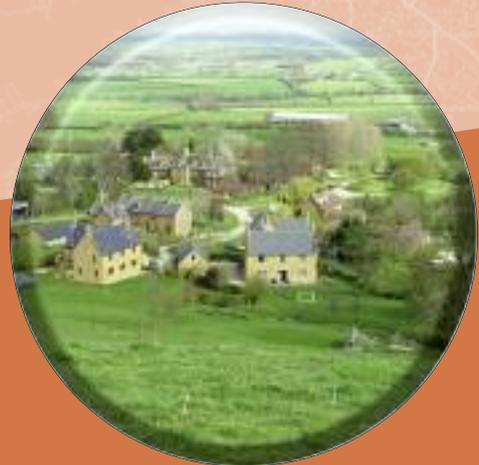
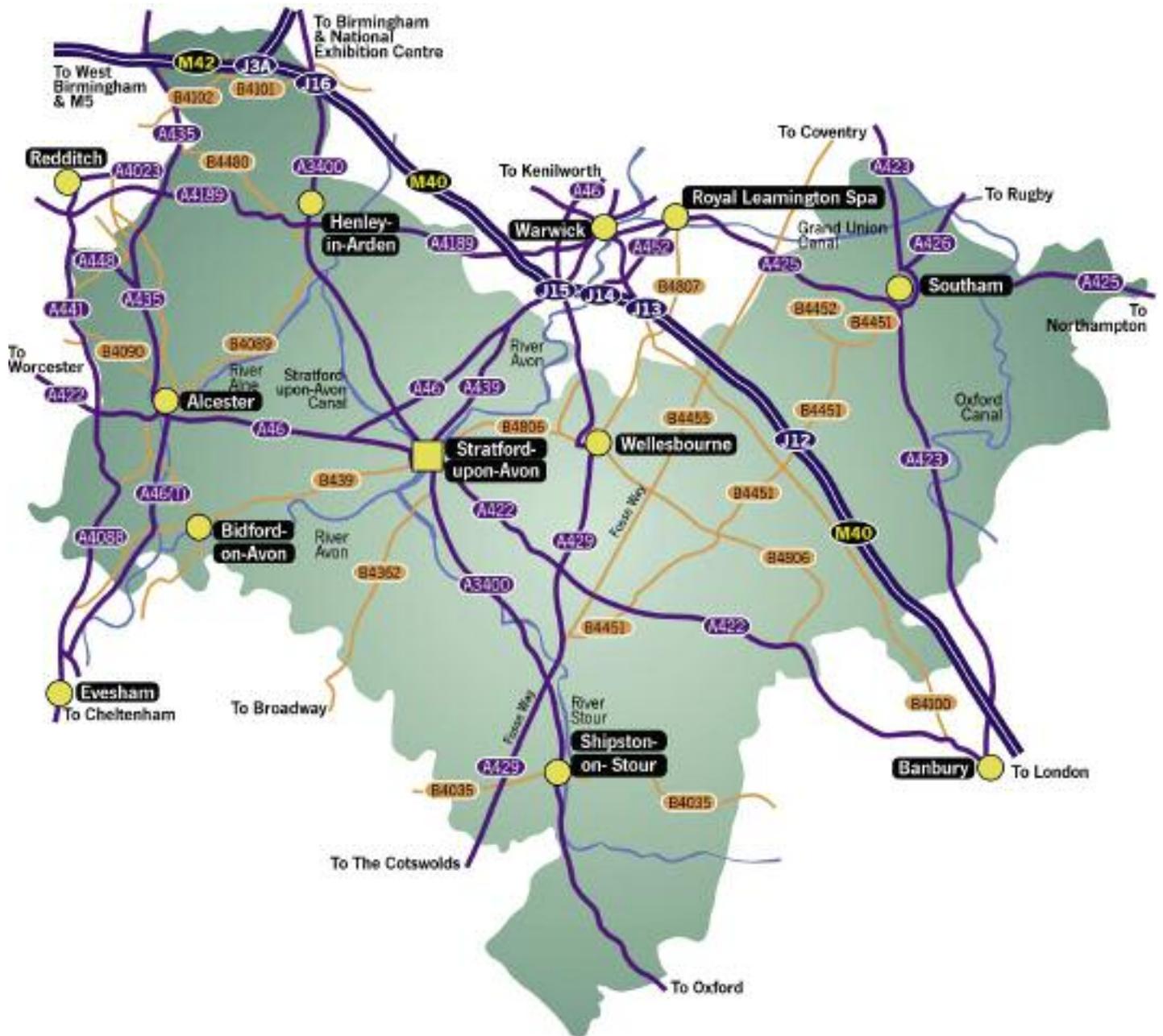




**Stratford-on-Avon District
Local Development Framework
Core Strategy - Issues and Options**



The Stratford-on-Avon District area





Stratford-on-Avon District Local Development Framework Core Strategy - Issues and Options

The sails symbol represents

- the cyclical nature of the planning process
- the importance of renewable energy in reducing global warming
- the iconic Chesterton Windmill that stands proud in our District

A large print copy, electronic copy or more copies of this publication are available on request from Planning Services

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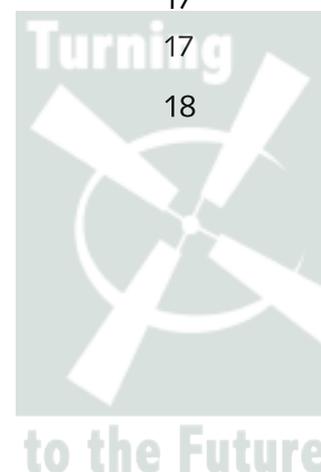


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Purpose of the document

The District Council has started to prepare a series of planning documents to guide development and change in the District over the next 20 years. These documents will be known as the Local Development Framework (LDF) and will replace the existing District Local Plan which was completed last year.

The Core Strategy is the first and probably most important part of the LDF because it will set the course for everything to follow. So it's essential that everyone has the opportunity to say what they think about how crucial matters should be dealt with.

A series of questions for you to answer is provided in the accompanying questionnaire.

The document and questionnaire are also available on the District Council's website www.stratford.gov.uk – there is a direct link off the home page. You can complete the questionnaire online if you prefer.

Local Development Framework

As the Local Plan has done before, the Local Development Framework (LDF) will still deal with the use of land. This means deciding where new homes should be built, where new jobs can be created and how people should travel to get to the things they need.

But 'the stage set is not the play'. In other words, while land use planning is important it doesn't give the full story.

Spatial planning is much more than how land is used; it is to do with how the area functions, how it looks and feels and how we respond to new challenges and opportunities.

In considering all these matters, the LDF will need to balance environmental issues with the economic and social needs for development. What is more, we have to ensure that change and development in the District are sustainable; that we do not cause irreversible

harm to important resources and features that future generations will need and enjoy.

Some of the rules which the LDF must work to are already set nationally and regionally, but it is important that the LDF meets the needs of the local community and responds to the issues which are important to those who live, work and play in the District.

Core Strategy

The Core Strategy will be a key part of the LDF. The Council has started to prepare this strategic planning document that will cover the period up to 2026. It will set a clear vision as to how Stratford-on-Avon District should look and function over the next 20 years. It will include a set of spatial objectives, a series of strategic policies, and monitoring and implementation frameworks.

The Core Strategy will not identify specific sites for development. This will be dealt with by another document on 'Significant Allocations' to be prepared during the year.

The Council has started to think about the key issues that will need to be tackled in the preparation of the Core Strategy. This document sets out our initial ideas about the issues and challenges the District faces. We would like to know your views on these and your ideas on how they can be addressed. We also want to find out if there are other issues which we should cover.

The responses received to this Issues and Options Document will have a key influence on the content of the Core Strategy: how it will influence where development should occur in the future and how the character of the District should be retained.

This is your first chance to be involved in preparing the Core Strategy. There will be further key stages of consultation and involvement:



- Preferred Options (November 2007) – a further chance to comment
- Submission to Secretary of State (April 2008) – opportunity to make formal representations
- Examination in Public (late 2008) – an independent Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State will consider representations

But don't wait for these stages; tell us what you think now because the closer we get to the final Core Strategy, the less scope we will have to change its content. What is more, your comments are likely to carry more weight in the eyes of the Inspector if they are made early on in the consultation process.

Key Influences

In preparing the Core Strategy we are not starting with a blank sheet of paper; there are a number of existing plans and strategies at national, regional and local level which we either must or should follow.

National and Regional Policy

The government produces a range of Planning Policy Statements which are gradually replacing previous Planning Policy Guidance Notes. We have to take what these say into account. Details of government planning policy can be found on www.communities.gov.uk.

The existing West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) was published in June 2004 and forms part of the statutory development plan for the area. It identifies four key challenges for the Region:

- urban renaissance - developing Major Urban Areas in such a way that they can increasingly meet their own economic and social needs in order to counter the unsustainable outward movement of people and jobs supported by previous strategies
- rural renaissance - addressing more effectively the major changes which are challenging the traditional role of rural areas and the countryside



- diversifying and modernising the Region's economy to ensure that opportunities for growth are linked to meeting needs and reducing social exclusion
- modernising the transport infrastructure of the West Midlands in order to support sustainable development in the Region.

When the Secretary of State issued the RSS in June 2004 he recommended that some topics should be looked at again and developed further. In response to this, the West Midlands Regional Assembly (the Regional Planning Body) undertook to carry out a phased revision of the RSS.

Phase 2 of the RSS revision covers housing growth, employment land, waste management and certain aspects of transport. A Spatial Options document was published for a period of consultation which ended on 5 March 2007. It sets out future development choices for the Region as a whole, and for individual parts of it, for the period up to 2026.

The consultation document can be viewed on the Regional Assembly's website www.wmra.gov.uk.

The Core Strategy for Stratford District is being prepared in parallel with the RSS Phase Two Revision.

Local Context

Stratford-on-Avon District lies at the heart of the country. The town of Stratford-upon-Avon is the largest settlement with a population of only 23,000. The next largest place is Alcester (including Kinwarton) which has a population of less than 8,000.

In all, there are about 250 communities of varying sizes spread across a predominately rural area covering 979 square kilometres. It is one of the largest districts in England making delivery of and access to services a major issue for residents.

Most of the District to the north of Stratford-upon-Avon lies within the West Midlands Green Belt. The Cotswolds Area of

Outstanding Natural Beauty extends into the southern fringes of the District.

Because the District covers such an extensive area, various towns outside its boundaries have a strong influence over how different parts of the area function. Leamington Spa, Banbury, Redditch and Solihull all have large shopping centres, provide a wide range of employment opportunities and support a variety of leisure facilities. Conversely, the pleasant countryside and cultural attractions of our District make it an appealing place for visitors from neighbouring areas as well as from further afield.

On the strategic transport front, while the M40 cuts across the District, there is only one full junction that lies within it, at Gaydon. Having said that, Junction 15 at Longbridge near Warwick is close by. The same applies to intercity railways lines, with the Chiltern Line between Birmingham and London Marylebone passing through the District. Although there are no stations on this section, Warwick Parkway, Leamington Spa and Banbury stations are relatively accessible.

Around 5.5 million people visit the District each year, with Stratford-upon-Avon and the Shakespeare properties being of international significance. Tourism is crucial to the local economy and is facing important challenges at the present time.

A significant factor is the higher average age of the District's populations compared with the national average. Almost 50% of its residents are over 45 and the proportion aged 85+ has increased by nearly half over the last ten years. This trend is likely to continue.

Property prices are extremely high and many people, especially the young and lower paid, cannot afford to live within or move into the District. This makes the provision of affordable housing a priority.

All this means that the District cannot be treated and planned in isolation; we have to understand and respond to such influences.

There are a number of existing and emerging plans and strategies which apply at the local level which the LDF will have to respond to. The principal ones are summarised below:

Community Plan

The District Council, and its partners in the public and voluntary sectors, have prepared a Community Plan for Stratford-on-Avon District. This Plan applies to the area, not to the Council or any one particular organisation. It identifies the aspirations, needs and priorities of the local community, and helps co-ordinate the actions of the Council and its partners.

The current version of the Community Plan sets the overall vision for Stratford District as follows:

'To maintain and enhance the heritage and green environment while building healthy, safe, informed and active communities enjoying local services and employment opportunities'

Seven priority areas are identified in which changes should be made to achieve this vision:

- improving confidence and public safety
- a healthy environment
- supporting communities
- supporting individuals
- lifelong learning
- economy and employment
- leisure and culture

The LDF is expected to make a significant contribution to each of these key areas and should assist in the achievement of the Community Plan's vision.



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Corporate Strategy

The Council's own Corporate Strategy has been prepared and adopted to help achieve the Community Plan. It identifies three core aims that act as a focus for the Council's activities and resources. These are:

- Developing Safer and Healthier Communities
- Creating Sustainable Communities
- Developing Inclusive Communities.

Work has continued on updating the Strategy to improve the ambition and focus of the Council. This culminated with the Council formally adopting an updated Strategy in April 2006. Of the targets set for the period 2005-08, two have already been achieved: providing electronic access to 100% of Council services (which includes planning applications and the Local Plan), and the setting up of a Youth Council to help develop services with and for young people.

Well-Being Strategy

The Local Futures Group published its assessment of well-being in Britain in its 'State of the Nation 2006' report. In the well-being tables issued by the Group, Stratford-on-Avon District is in 11th position overall in the national figures and is top of the 'Premiership' for the West Midlands.

In its report, the Group analysed the state of well-being as a target for the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan and local authority regeneration and community strategies up and down the country. The Group assessed well-being from the following perspectives:

- Economic – including productivity, industrial structure, enterprise, and skills and qualifications
- Social – including prosperity and wealth, deprivation and inequality, health and crime
- Environmental – including housing affordability, sustainable travel and 'the best of all possible worlds – city-country life'.



Whilst the overall good performance in all three categories is welcomed, action still needs to be undertaken to ensure that the well-being of the District is maintained. Particular issues identified in the report that require specific attention, in comparison with other local authority areas, include the following:

- Affordability of housing
- Accessibility of services
- Transport/communications
- Economic performance
- Skills and qualifications
- Occupational profile.

The challenges faced from this analysis have been identified as:

- Building a more competitive knowledge based economy;
- Creating a socially inclusive knowledge economy; and
- Improving/exploiting the quality of environmental assets.

The Council is preparing a Well-Being Strategy to address these challenges and the LDF will play a key part in implementing this strategy.

A 'Quality of Life in Warwickshire' report produced by the County Council concludes:

'Stratford-on-Avon District continues to display excellent performance in many areas, particularly the local economy, health and education. The main area for concern remains transport and transport-related indicators, with almost all of these below the County average and showing decline. Despite this, the District continues to be a very good place to live and work.'

Key Issues

Given the context outlined, in particular that set by the Community Plan, we have sought to identify those issues which have the greatest spatial implications. For that reason they are the issues that appear to be particularly relevant to the Core Strategy. These have been grouped under three core themes:

A. Securing a Healthy and Attractive Environment

B. Supporting Communities and Individuals

C. Promoting the Economy and Employment

The next three sections of this document deal with each of these themes and we seek your views on the issues and the potential options for addressing them.

Running throughout are two threads that are fundamental at both the global and local level:

1. Climate change

Climate change is now recognised by the UK government as the most fundamental threat to our future. The recent Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change makes it clear that human activity is changing the world's climate, and these changes will result in profound and rising costs for global and national prosperity, people's health and the natural environment

This evidence forces us to see the impact of our actions far beyond the immediate environment of this District. National policy expects spatial planning to play a pivotal role in achieving international targets for the reduction of carbon emissions. It requires us to prioritise the prevention of and preparation for climate change in our planning policies.

2. Equality of opportunity

Few people in this country are in abject poverty. But deprivation is relative and there are many individuals and families living in our District who face various forms of

disadvantage compared with the great majority of residents. For example, nearly 6,000 households are in receipt of means-tested benefits.

It is essential that the District Council and other agencies ensure that resources are more effectively directed towards those in greatest need. Planning policies have an important role to play in providing more affordable housing, creating suitable employment opportunities and making services people need more accessible. Achieving these things can be more difficult in rural areas where those in need tend to be more scattered and isolated than in towns and cities.



Relationship between Issues

We have set out a wide range of issues that need to be considered under the three themes of environment, community and economy. Many of the issues are closely related; going in a particular direction on one of them could have a positive or negative impact on another.

It is helpful to identify where key relationships exist between issues. The chart at the back of this document is our attempt at highlighting these. It shows:

- Those issues that should complement each other; that is they pull in the same direction. An example is where the design of buildings can have a positive effect on energy conservation.
- Those issues that could conflict with each other; that is they could pull in different directions. An example of this is where large numbers of visitors could have a harmful effect on our heritage unless carefully managed.

Strategic Objectives

The Core Strategy will also need to include a clear set of objectives against which its success can be measured. We would like your help in setting the Strategy's objectives.

The current District Local Plan Review sets the following objectives:

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- To satisfy housing needs
- To satisfy employment needs
- To secure high quality design
- To protect and enhance landscape character
- To foster biodiversity
- To protect historic heritage
- To promote alternative modes of transport to the car
- To facilitate energy conservation
- To sustain water resources
- To assist rural diversification
- To stimulate rural centres
- To enhance Stratford-upon-Avon town centre
- To support sustainable tourism
- To provide leisure opportunities

Clearly many things have changed since the existing Local Plan strategy was established, but these objectives still appear to be relevant.



Measures to reduce and adapt to climate change could alter our traditional landscapes and our approach to the environment. Even with these efforts some climate change is inevitable and will put additional pressure on our environment.

Carbon emissions

Emissions of greenhouse gases, particularly carbon dioxide, are the main cause of climate change. The UK government has committed under the Kyoto Protocol to reduce emissions, and has set its own more challenging targets for a 20% reduction by 2010 below 1990 levels and some 60% by 2050. New national planning policy proposes that targets will be set in the Regional Spatial Strategy for each district to achieve through their local planning policies in terms of energy efficiency and renewable energy.

Reducing emissions needs to be a cross-cutting priority across all the decisions made when producing this Core Strategy. It will need to have a major influence on the design and location of housing, employment, services, transport and leisure facilities.

Two areas where planning can make a difference are improving the energy efficiency of new development, and encouraging much greater use of small and large scale renewable energy sources. In the future we should be requiring a proportion of the energy needs of new development to be produced locally from low carbon and renewable sources. We need to consider what proportion can be achieved to reflect the full potential of these rapidly advancing technologies. The government's intention that new housing should be zero carbon within 10 years has to be achieved without preventing new building where it is needed.

We will also need to take a very positive, proactive approach to encouraging low carbon and renewable energy production outside new developments. This will involve micro-generation on existing development, as well as encouraging and identifying sites for larger-scale renewable production, such as windfarms.

A. Securing a Healthy and Attractive Environment

The local environment has a major impact on the character of the District. The attractive countryside, traditional landscapes and well-preserved heritage are highly valued by local people and visitors. Aspects such as the tranquillity of rural settings, clean air, opportunities for enjoying the countryside and a healthy natural environment are seen as key to a quality of life that attracts people to live here and businesses to locate here.

The environment that surrounds us is fundamental to the quality of our lives. It is easy to forget that the environmental resources that underpin many aspects of life are delicately balanced, and are facing many pressures. For example, new buildings and roads and changing agricultural practices have led over recent years to a reduction in the variety of habitats and species in the District.

There may sometimes be conflict between the appearance of new technologies and the valued traditional appearance of our district. We need to be clear about where heritage and landscape designations take priority over climate change considerations. Technologies which are not visually intrusive such as ground source heat could be promoted in these circumstances.

Flood risk

The floods of Easter 1998 that caused considerable damage to property and put lives at risk graphically illustrated the serious consequences of flooding. The Environment Agency has mapped the main areas subject to flood risk and these cover a significant amount of land within the district. The River Avon is the principal corridor of risk, followed by those of the Rivers Arrow, Alne, Stour, Dene, Itchen and Blythe. Smaller watercourses are also prone to flooding and it can also be caused by run-off from waterlogged fields. Scientists are telling us that extreme flood events are likely to occur more frequently due to global warming.

The Government is stressing the need for planning to take flood risk fully into account. It advocates the application of a 'sequential test' which means that development should be directed to land that has the least flood risk. However, there is an acceptance that such an approach may not provide sufficient sites for development. In these situations an 'exception test' should be applied, although any resulting development in flood risk areas has to be safe and not increase flood risk elsewhere.

Local planning authorities are strongly advised to appraise flood risk and a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) will need to have been completed before the Preferred Options stage is reached. An SFRA is intended to refine the information on flood risk already available through the Environment Agency's flood risk maps and assess flooding from other sources. The District Council is currently investigating whether an SFRA can be

undertaken in partnership with other local authorities. Flood risk is very much a cross-boundary issue since what happens in one area may well have an effect further down the river valley in another area.

The issue of flood risk is particularly relevant at Stratford-upon-Avon where a large area of land is prone to flooding. This will have a bearing on the consideration of proposals stemming from the World Class Stratford Project which are intended to enhance the Bridgeway area of the town.

One of the ways of reducing flood risk is through the proper management of surface water run-off from development sites. Development usually involves the creation of hard surfaces which accelerate the flow of rainfall off the site. At times of heavy rain run-off can have local and wider effects and can lead to the flooding of properties. The design of any development should consider surface water management and incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDs).

Measures include rainwater re-cycling, soakaways, porous surfaces and features to retain water on-site such as basins and ponds.



Biodiversity

National policy and our Community Plan identify biodiversity as a key challenge. We need to reverse the trend in the reduction of natural habitats and species in the District.

Changing agricultural practices, new development, and climate change are all putting increasing pressure on valuable habitats.

Planning in this district has focussed on protecting sites of biodiversity importance, partly through implementing legislation which requires us to protect specified habitats and species of international and national importance when making decisions on development. When looking at the location of new development in the Core Strategy we need to consider the biodiversity value of sites. Large mature gardens and brownfield sites can often have high value, while intensively farmed greenfield sites might in fact have a much lower value.

Traditionally the District Council has played a reactive rather than pro-active role. But there are many ways in which we could encourage the creation and enhancement of sites of biodiversity value.

New development should result in improvements to existing biodiversity. There are opportunities to provide a range of features such as sustainable drainage, tree planting, green roofs and unmanicured open space managed for wildlife.

Biodiversity requires a focus on 'joining up the dots' to allow species to travel and spread, rather than just creating isolated refuges. We could identify natural corridors of high value and focus efforts on enhancements to fill in the gaps. This could require new development to fund green infrastructure in the district.



There is a strong link between biodiversity and leisure and recreation, with potential for public access to natural areas and for a network of green corridors with value for wildlife and for leisure uses. Such features may be more valuable than carefully manicured open space and be a focus for a Greenspace Strategy.

Heritage

The heritage and built historic environment of the District is very highly valued and contributes significantly to the identity and character of the area. It also plays a key role in attracting visitors and tourists: a survey found that visitors rate the heritage and countryside as the top attractions of the area.

There are over 3000 Listed Buildings within the district, as well as 76 Conservation Areas covering the centres of Stratford-upon-Avon and the smaller market towns, and many of our traditional villages. Numerous sites of archaeological interest are scattered across the District. Our current planning policies seek to carefully protect and enhance these resources when considering planning applications for new development.

English Heritage advises that there is a need for a much wider focus than these designations in order to appreciate the value of resources such as locally key buildings, traditional farm buildings and every day heritage. An effective way to identify the special qualities of a place, and the key views and landmarks most valued by the local residents, is through community-led Village Design Statements and Parish Plans. Many local communities are keen to make more of these features.

There is information and research available that can assist in building a picture of the historic patterns of landscape and settlement in the District. It is important to retain these features and, when opportunities arise, to enhance them through specific schemes and initiatives.

Design and distinctiveness

The design of development brings together various elements that affect the quality of life in a settlement such as public/private space, landscape, crime, noise, and community relations. Good design should be about creating an enriched environment for people to live, work and visit.

Settlements and landscapes have their own distinctive characters that have evolved through the historical development of the area and are often highly valued by our generation. This distinctiveness is what defines a place and is often the key attraction of an area. The need to have regard to the character and quality of the local area and respect local distinctiveness, is a fundamental principle underlying our current design policies. Certain aspects of national planning policy such as the aim to increase the density of new housing developments may conflict with the character of existing areas.

Climate change and crime are issues of national and local significance. The design of individual buildings and the layout of new development can make an important contribution towards alleviating these major concerns.

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Because design creates a visual outcome and a functional purpose, poorly designed development is very easy to recognise and often raises an emotive debate about whether or not some developments were needed at all. Design policies should enable the adaptation of existing buildings to meet current expectations, whilst maintaining the character and quality of the area. The Core Strategy needs to set the necessary framework to achieve good and effective design.

Landscape and countryside

A large proportion of this District is countryside, with small villages set within it. Planning policy and practice must recognise the varied functions that are expected of the countryside including: agricultural production, outdoor recreation activities, valuable habitats for biodiversity and local homes and jobs.

The landscape of the countryside is also valued by residents and visitors for its aesthetic qualities, heritage and tranquillity. But there are many changes and threats to these functions and valued qualities.

Climate change can cause fragmentation of habitats and threats to various species, and changes to the landscape due to severe weather conditions such as flooding. Modern agricultural practices can have a dramatic impact on the landscape character of the countryside.

An increasing demand for tourism and recreation facilities puts pressure on the countryside. Various non-traditional uses could radically change the landscape, such as energy crops and renewable energy generation. New development is often seen as eroding the rural character of the countryside, particularly through poor design.

A wide range of issues will need to be addressed through the LDF:

- Continuing to protect important designations such as the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which extends into the southern fringe of the District.



- Reviewing how effective our local designations are and considering whether a more detailed criteria based approach would be more useful in protecting landscape character.
- Managing and balancing the predicted increased demands for flood defences, recreation, and energy crops.
- Allowing and encouraging a living, working countryside which meets development needs while protecting its special valued qualities.
- The scope to re-use existing rural buildings and the type of uses which would be appropriate.
- Encouraging positive uses such as local food production and supply chains renewable energy, and access and enjoyment of the countryside.

B. Supporting Communities and Individuals

The Core Strategy is not only about providing a framework for the quantity and distribution of development in the District. It should also aim to improve the quality of life and prosperity for all and create communities with distinctive characters of which we can be proud. The manner in which we provide for the needs of communities, such as housing, local services and leisure, and the interconnections between them, is vital to the overall success of the Core Strategy.

It is important to ensure that the benefits of development and service provision meet the needs of all sections of the community without any one group being disadvantaged or left out. Achieving this will require effective involvement of local communities in planning decisions that affect their lives.

A decent home is a basic human need but is also a place where people and families should be able to develop and foster community life. As well as providing goods and services, local shops and community facilities are places for social interaction and have an important social

function for many people. The ease and means by which people are able to access homes, job and services is a critical issue for the Core Strategy to deal with.

Housing Needs

The Community Plan identifies affordability of housing as a major issue. House prices and rents are continuing to rise with the result that many people cannot afford either to rent or purchase property within the District. This often results in:

- Young people and young families having to move out of the District
- People commuting into the District from areas with lower property prices
- Employers finding it difficult to recruit and retain staff.

The most recent assessment of housing needs in the District was completed at the end of last year. The assessment shows the need to provide many more affordable homes in the District if we are to meet the housing needs of local people. Given the backlog of unmet need there is a predicted net shortage of about 950 affordable homes each year for the next five years. Conversely, the assessment tells us that overall there are enough open market dwellings to cater for the demand from local people. The construction of more open market housing would be necessary only if the District is expected to cater for households moving into the District.

The review of the Regional Spatial Strategy will determine district-level housing requirements up to 2026. One of the principles underpinning the RSS is that the role of districts such as Stratford should largely be to meet their own local housing needs rather than to accommodate significant in-migration. This is reflected in the options which were published for consultation in January by the Regional Assembly.

Under the low growth option the District requirement from 2001 to 2026 would be 7,100 dwellings (an annual build rate of 284 dwellings). Under the two higher growth

options the district requirement would be 9,300 dwellings (an annual build rate of 372 dwellings). These figures are significantly lower than the requirements previously set in the Warwickshire Structure Plan. But this could constrain our ability to provide housing to meet local needs.



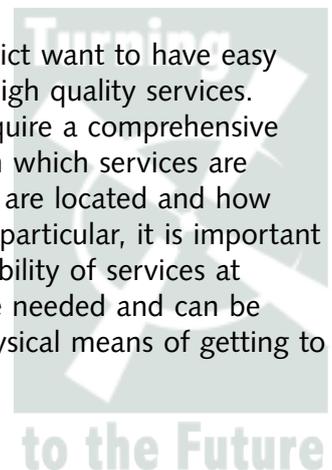
In addition to setting the amount of housing to take place, it will be important to ensure that the housing provided meets the specific needs of the local community. We know that the population structure of the District is getting older and that average household size continues to fall. The LDF should take these and other trends into account and consider:

- Type, tenure and size of new housing
- Provision of housing to meet the needs of specific sectors of the community, such as older people and key workers
- Opportunities to provide sustainable housing in terms of design, energy efficiency and the use of renewable sources.

Meeting the specific needs of gypsies and travellers is another issue which the Core Strategy will have to address and it may be necessary to provide a new site or sites. Currently there is inadequate information about the accommodation needs of this sector of the community. The District Council is undertaking a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment and its findings will inform the LDF.

Local Services

Residents of the District want to have easy access to and enjoy high quality services. Achieving this will require a comprehensive look at the manner in which services are provided, where they are located and how they are accessed. In particular, it is important to consider the availability of services at places where they are needed and can be sustained and the physical means of getting to them.



The LDF has a role to play in influencing the location of services but the planning system cannot provide all the answers when it comes to service provision, quality and cost. It should look to provide a framework to influence the location and retention of services, while the Council works with various partners to ensure their delivery.

There is no doubt that the quality of many of the services provided is high. The recent Ofsted Report on the state of schools in the District demonstrates this. However, the size of the District and the geographical spread of settlements place severe constraints on the provision of some basic services such as doctor's surgeries and Post Offices. The consequence is that many people have to travel longer distances to enjoy some basic services.

Rural services, such as shops, post offices and pubs, continue to decline. This is having a detrimental effect on the function of communities as they take on an increasingly dormitory nature.

This situation is exacerbated by the lack of public transport in many parts of the District which is a major disadvantage for those without access to a car. The distance and costs involved in getting to services are becoming increasingly problematic to many people.

Transport and accessibility

The Community Plan looks to improve the quality of life and prosperity for all. It also seeks to facilitate economic growth and rural diversification. There is no doubt that transport plays a key role in meeting these objectives. Achieving them while, at the same time, securing a sustainable transport system presents a significant challenge.

The level of car ownership is the highest in Warwickshire. Conversely, over 6,400 households in the District do not have a car and are therefore reliant on other forms of transport.

There is evidence to support the case that as we become more prosperous and our quality

of life improves we tend to travel more and over longer distances. This is having significant adverse impacts on global warming, the aesthetic quality of our communities and levels of congestion. As the rural economy becomes increasingly diversified, the potential for increased traffic on rural roads poses a threat to the essential rurality and tranquillity of many parts of the District. We need to recognise the implications for delivering these aspirations on the way that we manage our transport systems.

The manner in which we distribute development and services also has significant implications for travel. If we aim to meet the needs of local communities for homes and jobs and extend the benefits of tourism across the District we risk increasing the volume of traffic on rural roads. On the other hand, if we concentrate development in the larger urban areas, we risk increasing the distance travelled to enjoy these services by people living in rural locations. Whether transport should dictate where we locate development and services or the other way round is an issue we need to address.

What is more, the spread of settlements in the District can make public transport uneconomic to operate. The implications are that more travel is done by private car with adverse impacts on congestion and global warming. If our aim is to provide equal access to services and opportunities for all sections of the community, it is important that we respond to this situation.

Public confidence and safety

The importance placed on improving public confidence and safety by residents of this District is reflected in the priorities of the Community Plan. Crime rates are amongst the lowest in Warwickshire and the country as a whole. Yet the fear of being a victim of crime is very high and this affects the quality of life for many people. The number of road traffic accidents in the District is above the county average, primarily because of the rural nature of the District and the speed at which motorists travel.



Fear of crime can keep people inside and limit their use of facilities or open space and their interaction within a community. Safety is a key issue in determining our mode of transport. Many journeys such as the 'school run' and short evening trips which could be made by walking, cycling and public transport are instead made by car.

Planning can play an important role in improving public confidence and safety, supporting the work of partners such as the police, through:

- Applying strict 'secured by design' guidelines criteria to new development and public spaces
- Requiring new development to provide safe access for non-car users, with larger schemes providing improved access beyond the site itself
- Re-designing road space within larger settlements away from cars, through such measures as pedestrian priority areas and segregated cycle routes
- Supporting communities when they identify the need for traffic calming measures, through Parish Plans for instance.

Leisure and culture

Due to the size of the District and the number of small rural communities, local provision and access to leisure and cultural facilities is important. Providing for outdoor recreation is linked to many issues that need to be covered in the Core Strategy, such as health, community cohesion and the visitor economy. Public open spaces and corridors can provide attractive opportunities for walking and cycling, as well as natural habitats and green networks for wildlife.

There are opportunities to be much more proactive in improving access and provision of leisure and recreational facilities. We will need to prepare a comprehensive Greenspace Strategy to help decide how existing open spaces should be managed and where new open spaces are needed.



Our current planning policies protect existing recreational and cultural facilities and encourage new ones to be provided, particularly in larger settlements which are more accessible for people without a car. It is here that leisure centres, museums, libraries and facilities for the performing arts are mostly located.

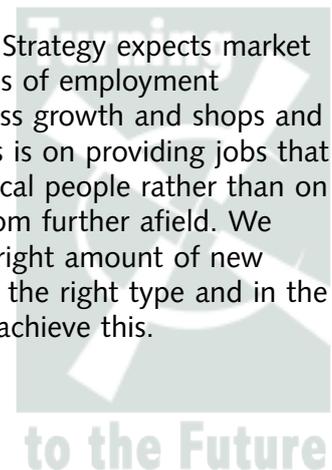
In this Core Strategy we should establish what approach would most benefit communities. It is necessary to consider whether it is better to concentrate on providing extensive facilities in the larger settlements of the District or to focus on ensuring that villages support opportunities for their residents to be involved in leisure and cultural pursuits.

C. Promoting the Economy and Employment

The UK's economy is changing rapidly in the face of global circumstances and it will have to adapt and become more innovative. Despite low levels of unemployment in the District (currently 1.2% compared with 2.6% nationally in September 2006) and relatively high average household incomes, the local economy is facing many challenges.

Even successful and vital areas of our economy, such as tourism, are experiencing difficulties. A key objective of the West Midlands Economic Strategy is to broaden the economic base of the region; it is important that Stratford District plays its part in this process.

The Regional Spatial Strategy expects market towns to be the focus of employment opportunities, business growth and shops and services. Its emphasis is on providing jobs that meet the needs of local people rather than on attracting workers from further afield. We need to provide the right amount of new employment land, of the right type and in the right places, to help achieve this.



Diversification

Planning can do little about halting the decline of certain sectors of the economy, such as agriculture and manufacturing, when there are wider forces at work. But it can help to provide the conditions needed to create new employment opportunities. Growth sectors in Stratford District are expected to include business services, along with education and health.

Substantial numbers of our residents commute to jobs outside the District, while many others travel into the area for work. One of the main reasons for this imbalance is the high proportion of low paid jobs in tourism, retail and services. Due to high property prices, many people in these jobs cannot afford to live here. Conversely, many of our residents have to commute to professional and managerial jobs outside the District.

It may well be that a greater range of employment opportunities should be provided in the District to achieve a better balance by attracting new businesses. These could include companies engaged in new technology (eg. medical, vehicle, environmental, communication) and 'added value' manufacturing.

The RSS identifies a number of High Technology Corridors, one of which abuts Stratford District. It might be appropriate to extend its influence into our area. Many companies look for a high quality environment which Stratford District offers because it suits their image and aspirations.

The ongoing loss of traditional jobs in the countryside means that new employment needs to be provided to help broaden the rural economy. This would also help to provide jobs for local people, support rural communities and reduce the need to travel or move house.

Investment

Stratford District is an attractive place to live and work but in many ways it is a victim of its own success. We expect high quality services, an effective transport network and attractive public spaces. Businesses expect the same things.

The pressures that residents, workers and visitors place on the fabric of the area are enormous. If we are to create the conditions whereby existing and new companies operate effectively, it is important that services and infrastructure are continually improved.

To achieve investment in the District it will also be necessary to provide sites that are attractive to new and expanding businesses. The nature and location of these sites will depend on the emphasis we wish to give to economic growth.

A focus on market towns, including Stratford-upon-Avon, and meeting the needs of our own residents, would be consistent with the RSS. This will mean looking closely at the character and capacity of each town in order to make the most of opportunities and to limit any detrimental impacts.



Given there is the prospect of a much lower rate of housing development in the District compared with recent years, a low rate of economic growth would appear to be appropriate. However, according to the 2001 Census, 40% of our employed residents work outside the District. On that basis, a case could be made for supporting a greater increase in jobs as a way of reducing out-commuting.

The initial stage in revising the RSS suggests that the level of employment development should reflect that achieved in recent years. The scope for a large amount of office-based development in the District is emphasised in particular.

Retail and commerce

Town centres have economic, social and cultural functions and provide a focus for activity. Their health is of huge significance for the quality of life of residents but they are vulnerable to changing lifestyles and economic forces. Focusing shops and services on local town centres is also important in environmental terms as it reduces the need to travel further afield and helps to support public transport.

Stratford-upon-Avon is the main town centre in the District, and is defined as a Strategic Centre in the RSS where any major retail, commercial and leisure development should be concentrated. A recent 'health check' has confirmed that the town centre is an attractive place to visit with a high quality environment, a wide range of attractions and a good mix of shops. On the other hand, it warned that unless action is taken the pressures exerted could result in a decline in overall quality.

Our rural market towns and similar centres in the District also have an important role to play in meeting the needs of their residents and the villages around them. Health checks and parish plans for each of them have emphasised a number of common issues; enhancing their environment, improving the quality of facilities, managing traffic and maintaining their economic and commercial vitality.

National planning policy expects the respective roles of the larger town centres and the rural centres to be maintained. This is likely to require investment in the fabric of buildings and spaces and improved infrastructure as a way of building confidence amongst those who run shops and other businesses.

Tourism

The effects of tourism have a strong influence on the character of south Warwickshire. It supports businesses, services and cultural activities and has helped to ensure that our local heritage and environment is valued and protected. Tourism contributes to the prosperity of the District, bringing in £240million of spending each year and supporting around 7,000 jobs.

But there is a need for tourism to adapt to new challenges such as competition from other attractions. Visitor numbers fell sharply due to the Foot and Mouth outbreak and the 9/11 terrorist attacks and, even though there has been a recovery, we should not take things for granted. A number of initiatives, such as World Class Stratford, have recognised

the need to improve what Stratford-upon-Avon has to offer and the quality of the visitor experience.

There is also scope to spread the benefits of tourism across a wider area. As well as the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty on its southern fringe, our District offers attractive countryside, including rivers and canals, historic houses and many pretty villages. The smaller market towns also have plenty to offer and would benefit from more visitors to them.

It is essential that tourism is managed sensitively otherwise damage could be caused to the very features that people come to enjoy. The volume of traffic can cause harm to towns and countryside and needs particular attention.

National policy encourages major tourist attractions to be provided in town centres where they are more accessible and can complement other commercial uses. This is a challenge for Stratford-upon-Avon because it is already under so much pressure and has limited capacity.

All the market town 'visions' and many Parish Plans that represent the views of their communities are supportive of encouraging more visitors by promoting their heritage and traditions.

In rural areas, a network of small attractions is likely to be the best approach. Farm diversification can play an important role in supporting agriculture and providing local jobs without undermining the character of the countryside.

Lifelong learning and skills

Although Stratford District benefits from generally high levels of qualifications, many of its residents have relatively low levels of basic skills. There would be clear advantages for our economy if skill levels were improved since this would help to attract new companies. It would also help to increase incomes in an area where property prices are very high.



The Community Plan seeks to make Stratford District a 'total learning community', where everyone has the opportunity to be engaged in learning. This will bring benefits to individuals, families and businesses.

The agencies that support education and learning will be more effective if they worked more closely together. This includes making sure there is scope for our schools and colleges to provide the quality of education all sections of our community require. A number of secondary schools in the District need extensive modernisation, even replacement. Stratford College is currently expanding and improving the services it provides, and Warwickshire College has specialist facilities at Henley-in-Arden and Moreton Morrell.

Of particular importance is the availability of learning opportunities in places that are convenient and accessible. As well as traditional centres of education, there is an important role for libraries, community centres and village halls to play.

It is important to make sure that vocational courses are provided that meet the skills gap in the District. This means working closely with employers since recent surveys have shown difficulties in filling certain types of jobs because of the lack of local people with the necessary skills and qualifications. The ongoing restructuring of our economy from manufacturing to the service sectors emphasises the need for people to learn new skills.



Options for the scale and location of development across the District

One of the fundamental expectations of the Core Strategy is that it should provide a 'vision' as to how we would like our District to look and function in twenty years time.



Creating such an image helps us to think about the direction we will have to go in and what decisions will have to be taken in order to realise the vision.

Of course the vision will comprise many facets, because it will affect different parts of the District in different ways.

The visions that have already been produced for Alcester, Shipston-on-Stour, Southam and Stratford-upon-Avon, in conjunction with those communities, contribute to this process. They have each set priorities and action plans to achieve their aspirations.

This approach needs to be extended to cover the nature and role of all the villages, large and small, across the District and the countryside that they lie within.

The amount and distribution of housing and employment development will have a major bearing on the future of the District and the realisation of the vision we have for it.

Scale of development

As well as deciding the main issues to be covered in the Core Strategy, it is necessary to consider the options, or choices, relating to the amount, type and location of development in the District up to 2026.

To a large extent we will have to follow the general thrust of national planning policy and the direction given in the Regional Spatial Strategy. At the moment the RSS is being revised and it is not yet clear what level of future housing and employment development in the District will be set.

It is important at this stage in preparing the Core Strategy to give a number of realistic options on the amount of development that should take place in the District in the coming years. Reflecting the emerging RSS Revision but also taking into account the characteristics of the District, we put forward the following options for you to consider.

Housing for the District

The recent consultation document on the RSS Revision sets out three options for the amount of housing to be provided in each part of the region. For Stratford District all three options would expect a much lower rate of development than we have experienced in recent years. The emphasis would be very much on meeting the needs of our own residents.

Amount of housing development in Stratford District 2001-2026

Annual number of dwellings completed 2001-2005	RSS Option One		RSS Option Two		RSS Option Three	
	Total number of dwellings to be completed 2001-2026	Dwellings to be completed each year	Total number of dwellings to be completed 2001-2026	Dwellings to be completed each year	Total number of dwellings to be completed 2001-2026	Dwellings to be completed each year
640	7,200	288	9,300	372	9,300	372

It is not possible at this time to assume the outcome of the RSS Revision process. There are many factors that will have to be taken into account. For instance, the latest version of Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing, issued by the government in November 2006, says that 'developers should bring forward proposals for market housing which reflect demand and the profile of households requiring market housing'.

Also, research carried out for the District Council and other local authorities in the southern part of the region has shown a higher level of housing need than the options in the emerging RSS Revision suggest.

About 3,000 dwellings have already been built in the District in the period 2001-06; an average of 600 dwellings each year. This has been taken into account in applying the RSS Revision figures to produce the following table.

Suggested options for the amount of Housing Development 2006-2026

	Low Option	Medium Option	High Option
Total number of dwellings to be completed *	4,200	6,300	9,500
Number of dwellings to be completed each year (average)	210	315	475

Explanation of Options

Low - accords with Option One in RSS Phase Two Revision Spatial Options

Medium - accords with Options Two and Three in RSS Phase Two Revision Spatial Options

High - acknowledges the level of local housing need that exists in the District



Employment for the District

The amount of land for employment purposes that the RSS Revision consultation document proposes reflects the rate of development in the District over the past ten years. Since about 75 hectares have been built in that time, this results in a requirement for 185-200 hectares in the period from 2001 up to 2026.

On the face of it, this appears to be on the high side, particularly as the level of housing development is proposed to be much lower than in the past. It is certainly much higher than would be required if the intention is to meet the employment needs of our own residents.

Suggested options for the amount of Employment Development 2006-2026

	Low Option	Medium Option	High Option
Total amount of land to be developed (hectares*)	30	90	150
Number of hectares to be developed each year (average)	1.5	4.5	7.5

*one hectare is about 2.5 acres

Explanation of Options

Low - based on the number of additional jobs that the existing population in the District, together with natural increase, could support

Medium - a mid point between the low and high options

High - accords with the approach taken in RSS Phase Two Revision Spatial Options based on recent rates of development

Location of development

Deciding where development should take place in the District in the future is probably the most challenging part of the task we face. This is particularly the case because there is more scope for us 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 we will need 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.

A number of options are suggested for you to think about:

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

The West Midlands Green Belt extends into the District as far as Stratford-upon-Avon.

This national designation applies rigorous controls over many forms of development. However, there may be circumstances under certain of the options where sites currently in the Green Belt could be used for development.

The option that is eventually followed will determine where most development should happen but it does not mean there would be no development elsewhere.

It is not appropriate or necessary at this stage to identify actual areas of land that could be made available for housing and employment development under each of the options. We will start to look at specific sites later in the process.



As well as taking your views into account, we will have to assess the likely consequences of each option in detail. The following matters will 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.

It should be pointed out that the emerging RSS Revision suggests the medium and high housing options relating to Redditch Borough may have implications for development in neighbouring areas.

Stratford-on-Avon District Council is to work on a joint study with Redditch Borough Council to assess the various options available. We will want to make sure that the interests of our communities, such as Studley and Mappleborough Green, are fully considered.

Next Steps



Following this consultation stage about the issues that should be addressed and the options available, we will assess all the comments received, along with other sources of evidence and information.

A further period of consultation will be carried out on the Preferred Options that the District Council proposes. We should reach this stage by November 2007.

This will lead to the preparation of the Core Strategy itself, which will finalise the vision, objectives and key policies that we believe will set the direction for planning and influence other decisions of this Council over the next twenty years. This will be submitted to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, hopefully by April 2008.

A formal period for making representations is provided and an Examination in Public will be held into issues selected by a Panel appointed by the Secretary of State. It should be

appreciated, however, that issues raised at a late stage in the process may be disregarded by the Panel. This emphasises the need for you to make your comments now.

We hope that the Core Strategy will be adopted by May 2009, when it will replace the equivalent policies in the District Local Plan Review.

Following just behind each of these stages and going through the same process, will be the production of what is known as the Significant Allocations Document. This will consider options relating to specific sites where development, particularly for housing and employment, should take place and when during the period up to 2026.

The approach taken in the Core Strategy will have a major bearing on the type, location and purpose of sites that are eventually identified for future development in the Local Development Framework.

to the Future

Chart showing interaction between issues

		ENVIRONMENTAL						SOCIAL					ECONOMIC				
		Carbon Emissions	Flood Risk	Biodiversity	Historic Environment	Design	Landscape & Countryside	Housing Needs	Local Services	Transport	Public Safety	Leisure & Culture	Diversification	Investment	Retail & Commerce	Tourism	Learning & Skills
ENVIRONMENTAL	Carbon emissions		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	Flood Risk	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	Biodiversity	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	Historic Environment	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	Design	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	Landscape & Countryside	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
SOCIAL	Housing Needs	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	Local Services	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	Transport	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	Public Safety	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●
	Leisure & Culture	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●
ECONOMIC	Diversification	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●
	Investment	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●
	Retail & Commerce	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●
	Tourism	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●
	Learning & Skills	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●

- Major relationship between issues
- Minor relationship between issues
- Minimal/neutral relationship between issues
- Potential significant conflict between issues, ie they pull in different directions



If you find the text in this document difficult to read, we can supply it in a format better suited to your needs.



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