



Shaping our future



SOUTH LAKELAND LOCAL PLAN 2040

South Lakeland Local Plan Review

Sustainability Appraisal

Scoping Report:

Non-Technical Summary

June 2021





1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This is a non-technical summary of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Scoping Report for the South Lakeland Local Plan Review.
- 1.1.2 A Local Plan sets out how much new development is needed, where it should be located, and which areas should be protected from development. A Local Plan contains policies to set out requirements for new development to ensure it is appropriate for its location, is high quality and delivers benefits for local communities and the environment. Sustainable development should be at the heart of every Local Plan.
- 1.1.3 We need to regularly review our Local Plan to ensure it remains fit for purpose and will help us meet the challenges facing our area. We are not starting from a blank sheet of paper – we already have a Local Plan which comprises of a number of documents including the Core Strategy, Land Allocations, Development Management Policies and a Local Plan for the Arnsdale and Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). More information about our Local Plan can be found on our [website](#)¹.
- 1.1.4 The new single Local Plan will update and replace the current Local Plan documents (except for the AONB Local Plan) and set out the development framework for the district (outside the National Parks) for the period 2020-2040. It will include an overall strategy for how the area should develop, allocate sites for development, and designate areas for protection from development, and will include a range of planning policies that will be used to decide planning applications and set out the requirements for new development.

2 What is Sustainability Appraisal?

- 2.1.1 Sustainability Appraisal is a legal requirement² and its role is to assess and improve the economic, social and environmental effects of a plan and to monitor its impacts. The SA helps us assess the relative merits of a range of different options and alternatives and helps us determine the most appropriate option that will deliver the best outcomes for our area. It also helps identify measures that will be required to help mitigate any harmful effects from the plan. The SA 'tells the story' of the plan-making processes – it documents how decisions have been made and how they have been informed by environmental and sustainability concerns.

¹ www.southlakeland.gov.uk/LocalPlan

² section 19 (5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act



- 2.1.2 The results of the appraisal are set out and analysed in an SA Report which will sit alongside and inform each stage of the Local Plan review process. It will be updated as the Local Plan review progresses to record each stage.
- 2.1.3 'Scoping' is the first stage of a sustainability appraisal and the first exercise is to identify the key sustainability issues facing the district that the Local Plan needs to take account of. Scoping also looks at the wide range of international, national and local plans, strategies, policies and laws that will influence the Local Plan, and identifies any targets within them that the Local Plan should help achieve, such as the reduction of carbon emissions. Scoping also sets out the assessment framework that will be used in the SA and presents a range of objectives that the Local Plan's strategy, sites and policies should seek to achieve.

3 What are the key issues and challenges facing South Lakeland?

- 3.1.1 The key issues and challenges facing South Lakeland are summarised below and have been identified from a review of local evidence on our characteristics and changing trends, and from looking at a range of plans and strategies that affect the area.

Social Issues

- **Population projections:** There are more deaths than births each year in South Lakeland and without people moving into the area our population would be in decline.
- **Ageing population:** We are 'super-ageing' area which will pose challenges in terms of health and services provision, the social sustainability of communities, and in ensuring suitable housing options for older people.
- **Affordable housing:** Houses here are less affordable than regionally and have become less affordable in recent years.
- **Wealth inequalities:** Whilst as whole South Lakeland is relatively prosperous, there are areas of relative deprivation and large inequalities between the least and most affluent areas.
- **Public health challenges:** South Lakeland is generally healthy compared with national averages, however there are key public health challenges associated with an ageing population and other local issues of concern such as childhood obesity and mental health.
- **Vitality of rural communities:** There are various challenges for our rural communities including access to services, facilities and public transport, housing affordability, sustaining social support networks and mixed communities in the context of ageing populations, issues with second/holiday homes in some



communities, and securing viable futures for rural services in a wider climate of public funding pressures and changing social habits.

Environmental Issues

- **Greenhouse gas emissions and the climate crisis:** Greenhouse gas emissions per person are falling, but not fast enough, and are still above regional and national levels, likely due to the rural nature of the district.
- **Flood risk:** Large areas of South Lakeland are at risk of flooding and the risk and impacts will worsen with climate change.
- **Sensitive landscapes:** The district has varied landscapes that are generally sensitive to changes such as new development, and there are particular challenges raised by tourism development pressure.
- **Biodiversity and geodiversity value and opportunities:** The district has a wealth of internationally, nationally and locally designated sites that are important for their biodiversity and geodiversity. More needs to be done to protect and enhance habitats and networks and to reverse the decline in biodiversity.
- **Water quality and resources:** not all waterbodies in the Local Plan area are of a good quality, and some are very sensitive to changes. Water resources also need to be sustainably managed to achieve environmental objectives.
- **Air quality issues:** Air quality still remains an issue in particular hotspots in the district and an Air Quality Management Area remains in force in Kendal.
- **Rural transport challenges:** The rural nature of the district limits public transport opportunities, and reliance on private cars is relatively high compared with regional and national averages, which poses challenges in promoting sustainable travel.
- **Brownfield land opportunities:** Most new housing development has taken place on brownfield land in the current Local Plan period (2003 onwards) however in recent years housing completions on greenfield land have exceeded brownfield completions for the first time in the plan period.
- **Historic environment and local character:** South Lakeland has a wealth of heritage assets that contribute to its special character. Insensitive development poses a risk to the area's heritage and character and in some areas it has been eroded over time with small incremental changes.

Economic Issues

- **High employment rates but lower earnings:** Employment rates are high and unemployment is low, but average weekly earnings for jobs in the district fall below regional and national averages, and are lower than residence based average earnings in the district, resulting in people commuting out of the district for better paid work. The local economy has been hit hard by covid-19 due to the impacts on tourism and hospitality sectors.



- **Town centre and high street challenges:** National retail trends and difficult trading conditions could impact on the district's high streets, and issues have been further compounded by the covid-19 pandemic.
- **Small and shrinking working age population:** A relatively small proportion of South Lakeland's population is working age and it is shrinking. Young people are leaving the area to undertake higher education, find work or affordable housing and often don't return due to a lack of suitable jobs and housing affordability which exacerbates this issue. Also skills gaps make it difficult for local businesses to attract highly qualified staff.
- **Infrastructure constraints:** Constraints and inadequacies in existing road and rail infrastructure, particularly east-west connections increase journey times and restrict economic growth opportunities. Digital infrastructure constraints such as poor broadband speeds in some rural areas also limit economic growth.

4 How will the appraisal be carried out?

- 4.1.1 As ideas and options are developed for the new Local Plan, such as options for the development strategy, site allocations or policies for determining planning applications they will be assessed against the key sustainability objectives that have been developed below.

Social Objectives

- To ensure people have good access to essential services and community facilities.
- To provide everyone with a decent home
- To reduce wealth inequalities and support financial resilience
- To improve people's health and sense of wellbeing
- To support and create vibrant, inclusive and resilient communities

Environmental Objectives

- To protect, enhance and maintain habitats, biodiversity and geodiversity, and to deliver biodiversity net gains.
- To conserve and enhance landscape quality and character for future generations
- To conserve and enhance the historic environment and locally distinctive character
- To protect, maintain and enhance green and blue infrastructure
- To reduce flood risk to local communities
- To reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air pollutants, and reduce reliance on fossil fuels to mitigate climate change
- To improve and manage water quality and sustainably manage water resources
- To ensure the sustainable use of land, minerals, materials and soil resources, and minimise waste



Economic Objectives

- To enhance the range of high quality employment opportunities in the district and improve access to them
- To ensure the future vitality and viability of town centres
- To diversify and strengthen the local economy

4.1.2 A number of questions will be asked throughout the SA process to assess how each option (e.g. a draft policy or site allocation) will help us achieve the above goals and scores will be assigned to help compare options against one another. These scores will be as set out in the table below and will range from significant positive effects through to significant negative effects. Sometimes the effects won't be clear and sometimes policies or sites might not have any impacts on our sustainability objectives.

4.1.3 We will need to think about whether the impacts of the proposed policies or sites in the Local Plan review will be short term or long term, what geographical area they could affect and whether the impacts will be temporary or permanent. We will also need to think about the combined impacts of policies or sites, for example the combined impacts of housing sites on air quality.

Impact	Description	Symbol
Significant Positive Effect	The option/policy/site contributes significantly to the achievement of the objective.	++
Minor Positive Effect	The option/policy/site contributes to the achievement of the objective but not significantly.	+
No Impact / Neutral	The proposed option/policy/site does not have any effect on the achievement of the objective.	0
Minor Negative Effect	The option/policy/site detracts from the achievement of the sustainability objective but not significantly.	-
Significant Negative Effect	The option/policy/site detracts significantly from the achievement of the sustainability objective.	--
No relationship	There is no clear relationship between the option/policy/site and the achievement of the objective or the relationship is negligible.	X
Uncertain Impact	It is not possible to determine the nature of the impact for example insufficient information may be available, or there may be uncertain impacts from external influences outside the Local Plan's control.	?

4.1.4 This approach will help identify the most sustainable options for the plan, and identify areas where measures are needed to improve the positive effects and reduce the



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harmful effects. The appraisal will be carried out alongside, and will inform each stage of the Local Plan review, to make sure that at every stage sustainable development goals influence the plan.

5 What are the next steps?

- 5.1.1 The SA scoping report will be updated based on any feedback received during the Issues and Options consultation. An SA report will be published alongside the Draft Local Plan consultation in summer 2022 which will present the assessment of all the policy and site options that are being developed. The SA report will then be updated at each consultation stage of the Local Plan Review.