



Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Bramley Neighbourhood Plan



Environmental Report Update

June 2016

REVISION SCHEDULE

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Top left: Bramley railway station (Basingstoke Observer)

Top right: Green Farm (Bramley Parish Council)

Middle right: Bramley Inn public house

Bottom left: St. James' Church (Charles D P Miller)

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INTRODUCTION

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1.1 AECOM is commissioned by Bramley Parish Council to undertake Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Bramley Neighbourhood Plan (NP).
- 1.1.2 The Bramley NP is being drawn up using the powers in the Localism Act 2011. The NP is being prepared by Bramley Parish Council, which has been recognised by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council as the 'relevant body' for the plan area. The Bramley NP, once adopted, will present planning policy and guidance for the NP area. Alongside the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan, it will provide a framework for planning decisions.
- 1.1.3 SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely effects of a draft plan, and alternatives, with a view to avoiding and mitigating adverse environmental effects and maximising the positives. SEA is a legal requirement for the Bramley NP.¹

2 SEA EXPLAINED

- 2.1.1 It is a requirement that SEA is undertaken in-line with the procedures prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, which were prepared in order to transpose into national law the European SEA Directive.²
- 2.1.2 In accordance with the SEA Regulations, a report (the 'Environmental Report') must be published for consultation alongside the draft plan that essentially presents information on the likely significant effects of implementing the plan, and reasonable alternatives.³ The report must then be taken into account, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the plan.

3 THIS ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT UPDATE

- 3.1.1 This document is an update to the Environmental Report published for consultation alongside the pre-submission version of the Bramley NP in May 2015. As per the 2015 report, this report sets out to answer four broad questions:
1. What's the scope of the SEA?
 - i.e. what are the issues/objectives that should be a focus of SEA?
 2. What has plan-making / SEA involved up to this point?
 - Preparation of the draft plan must have been informed by at least one earlier plan-making / SEA iteration. 'Reasonable alternatives' must have been assessed.
 3. What are the SEA findings at this stage?
 - i.e. in relation to the draft plan.
 4. What happens next (including monitoring)?
- 3.1.2 Each of the questions is answered in turn below.

¹ SEA is not an automatic requirement for neighbourhood plans. Rather, SEA is a requirement where an initial 'screening' assessment identifies the potential for the neighbourhood plan to result in significant environmental effects. On 16 October 2014, the Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council confirmed that SEA would be required for the Bramley NP. They also identified that Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) would not be required. See <https://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/content/doclib/835.pdf> and <https://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/content/doclib/834.pdf>

² Directive 2001/42/EC

³ Schedule 2 of the Regulations lists the information that must be presented in the Environmental Report.

PART 1: WHAT IS THE SCOPE OF THE SEA?

4 INTRODUCTION TO PART 1

4.1.1 Part 1 of this report aims to introduce the reader to the scope of the SEA. In particular, and as required by the Regulations, the following chapters answer the series of questions below.

- What is the plan seeking to achieve?
- What is the context?
- What is the baseline?
- What are the key issues and objectives that should be a focus of SEA?

4.1.2 **Chapter 5** answers the first question by listing the objectives of the Bramley NP. The other three scoping questions are answered in **Chapters 6 to 8**, with each question answered for the following nine sustainability topics:

- air quality;
- biodiversity;
- climate change (including flood risk);
- land, soil and water resources;
- historic environment and landscape;
- population and community;
- health and well-being;
- transport; and
- economy and enterprise.

4.1.3 Rather than focusing strictly on the environment, the topics cover all three dimensions of sustainable development, i.e. the environmental, social and economic pillars. This is appropriate given that sustainable development is a stated objective for neighbourhood plans.⁴ Extending the scope of an SEA in this way does not mean that environmental issues are less likely to achieve prominence.

4.2 Consultation on the SEA scope

4.2.1 The Regulations require that: *“When deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the Environmental Report, the responsible authority shall consult the consultation bodies”*. In England, the consultation bodies are Natural England, the Environment Agency and Historic England^{5,6}.

4.2.2 As such, these authorities were consulted on the SEA scope in between 12 March and 17 April 2015. Specifically, the authorities were presented with an SEA Scoping Report for comment; and comments received on the scope were subsequently taken on-board.

4.2.3 Responses were received from all three statutory consultees, with Historic England going into most detail, e.g. welcoming reference to the ‘atmosphere’ of Bramley village, and suggesting that a characterisation study be beneficial to inform the design of new development, identify beneficial townscape improvements and act as a baseline to measure change against. The Parish Council has undertaken a Bramley village character assessment (Appendix C to the NP) and this has informed both the development of the NP and the SEA.

⁴ At Examination the plan will need to demonstrate that it meets the ‘basic condition’ of contributing to sustainable development.

⁵ Prior to 1 April 2015 Historic England’s role as a statutory consultee was undertaken by English Heritage.

⁶ In accordance with Article 6(3) of the SEA Directive, these consultation bodies were selected because ‘by reason of their specific environmental responsibilities, [they] are likely to be concerned by the environmental effects of implementing plans and programmes.’

5 WHAT IS THE PLAN SEEKING TO ACHIEVE?

5.1.1 The purpose of the Bramley NP is to provide a strategic and long-term plan for the area that reflects the values of those living and working in the area. While the objectives of the NP recognise the need for housing, they also reflect the rural character of the village. The NP also seeks to resolve other issues, including around parking and congestion in the village.

5.1.2 The NP has seven key objectives:

- **BSA1:** To make provision for new housing development which satisfies local strategic growth requirements, fulfils local housing needs, and enables locally needed infrastructure to be delivered.
- **BSA2:** To ensure that all new developments are proportionate in size and complement and enhance the rural character of the village.
- **BAS3:** To maintain and enhance the range of community and recreational amenities, services and facilities appropriate for Bramley.
- **BSA4:** To protect the rural character of the village and its setting and minimize the environmental impact of new development.
- **BSA5:** To improve pedestrian and cycle connections within Bramley and to surrounding destinations.
- **BSA6:** To resolve problems of on street parking, congestion and safety associated with the railway station level crossing and nearby shops and businesses.
- **BAS7:** To provide opportunities for suitable new employment development in Bramley.

5.1.3 The NP's vision for the area is that:

In 2029 Bramley will be an attractive village with a strong rural character, excellent and conveniently located community facilities, a range of high quality homes fulfilling local needs, safe and convenient access to transport services and green spaces, and good opportunities for locally based employment.

5.2 What the plan is not seeking to achieve?

5.2.1 It is important to emphasise that the plan looks to set policy of a strategic nature, recognising that some issues can be addressed through the subsequent planning application process. The strategic nature of the plan is reflected in the scope of the SEA.

6 WHAT IS THE CONTEXT?

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 An important step when seeking to establish the appropriate scope of an SEA involves reviewing context messages in relation to: broad problems / issues; and objectives, i.e. 'things that are aimed at or sought'. Messages from the review are presented below under the topic headings introduced above. Specific consideration is given to international and national context messages, in-line with requirements.⁷ National context messages are established first and foremost by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).⁸

6.2 Air quality

6.2.1 The NPPF makes clear that planning policies should be compliant with and contribute towards EU limit values and national objectives for pollutants; and states that new and existing developments should be prevented from contributing to, or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of air pollution. This includes taking into account air quality management areas (AQMAs) and cumulative impacts on air quality.

6.3 Biodiversity

6.3.1 The NPPF and other policy documents emphasise the need to protect important sites, plan for green infrastructure and plan for ecological networks at 'landscape scales' taking account the anticipated effects of climate change. National policy reflects the commitment to 'halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020'.

6.4 Climate change (including flood risk)

6.4.1 In its 2007 strategy on climate change, the European Commission recommends a package of measures to limit global warming to 2°C. On energy, the Commission recommends that the share of renewable energy grows to 20% by 2020 against the 1990 baseline. In the UK the Climate Change Act 2008 has set legally binding targets on reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the UK by at least 80% by 2050 and 34% by 2020. The NPPF emphasises the key role for planning in securing radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, including in terms of meeting the targets set out in the Climate Change Act 2008. Plan-making should support efforts to:

- Reduce transport emissions by concentrating new developments in existing cities and large towns and/or ensuring they are well served by public transport.
- Deliver infrastructure such as low-carbon district heating networks.
- Increase energy efficiency in the built environment.

6.4.2 The NPPF also requires local plans to take account of the effects of climate change in the long term, taking into account factors such as 'flood risk, coastal change, water supply and changes to biodiversity and landscape. Planning authorities are encouraged to 'adopt proactive strategies' to adaptation.

⁷ Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

⁸ DCLG (2012) National Planning Policy Framework [online] available at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

6.4.3 In terms of flooding, the NPPF calls for development to be directed away from areas highest at risk, with development 'not to be allocated if there are reasonably available sites appropriate for the proposed development in areas with a lower probability of flooding'. Where development is necessary, it should be made safe without increasing levels of flood risk elsewhere. The NPPF also states that local planning authorities should avoid 'inappropriate development in vulnerable areas or adding to the impacts of physical changes to the coast' in order to reduce the risk from coastal change.

6.4.4 The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 highlights that alternatives to traditional engineering approaches to flood risk management include: incorporating greater resilience measures into the design of new buildings, and retro-fitting at risk properties (including historic buildings); sustainable drainage systems (SuDS); utilising the environment, such as management of the land to reduce runoff and harnessing the ability of wetlands to store water; identifying areas suitable for inundation and water storage to reduce the risk of flooding elsewhere; and planning to roll back development in coastal areas to avoid damage from flooding or coastal erosion.

6.5 Land, soil and water resources

6.5.1 There is a need to encourage the effective use of land through the reuse of land which has been previously developed, provided that this is not of high environmental value. The NPPF requires an approach to housing density that reflects local circumstances.

6.5.2 The NPPF calls upon the planning system to protect and enhance soils. It expects planning authorities 'to take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. Where development on agricultural land is necessary, planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.

6.5.3 Also, new or existing development should also be prevented from being 'adversely affected' by the presence of 'unacceptable levels' of soil pollution or land instability and be willing to remediate and mitigate 'despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land'.

6.5.4 In relation to water resources, the NPPF states that local planning authorities should produce strategic policies to deliver the provision of a variety of infrastructure, including that necessary for water supply.

6.6 Historic environment and landscape

6.6.1 There is a need to set out a 'positive strategy' for the 'conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment', including those heritage assets that are most at risk. Heritage assets should be recognised as an 'irreplaceable resource' that should be conserved in a 'manner appropriate to their significance', taking account of 'the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits' of conservation, whilst also recognising the positive contribution new development can make to local character and distinctiveness. Other key messages from the NPPF include that planning should "contain a clear strategy for enhancing the natural, built and historic environment" (paragraph 157) and "neighbourhood plans should develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area...based on stated objectives for the future of the area and an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics" (paragraph 58).

6.6.2 The European Landscape Convention (ELC) came into force in the UK in March 2007. The ELC defines landscape as: "An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors." It recognises that the quality of all landscapes matters, not just those designated as 'best' or 'most valued'. The NPPF refers to the need to protect and enhance valued landscapes and identifies that major development should be avoided in designated areas, unless in the public interest.

6.7 Population and community

- 6.7.1 A core planning principle is to 'take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all'. The NPPF also emphasises the need to: facilitate social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities; promote retention and development of community services / facilities; ensure access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation; and promote vibrant town centres.
- 6.7.2 Local planning authorities should significantly boost the supply of housing and seek to ensure that 'full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing' are met. With a view to creating 'sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities' authorities should ensure provision of affordable housing onsite or externally where robustly justified. Plans for housing mix should be based upon 'current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community'. Larger developments are suggested as sometimes being the best means of achieving a supply of new homes. Meeting housing needs in rural areas and 'rural exception sites' can be necessary.
- 6.7.3 Planning policy for traveller sites (2012)⁹ sets out the government's planning policy for traveller sites and should be used in conjunction with the NPPF. It aims to ensure travellers are treated in a fair and equal manner that facilitates their traditional and nomadic way of life, whilst also respecting the interest of the settled community. Local authorities are called upon to make their own assessment of need for traveller sites - using a robust evidence base and effective engagement with stakeholder groups and other local authorities - and to allocate sites accordingly. The government's aims include:
- Ensuring that local plans include, fair, realistic and inclusive policies;
 - Enabling the provision of suitable accommodation from which travellers can access education, health, welfare and employment infrastructure; and
 - Having due regard for the protection of local amenity and environment.

6.8 Health and well-being

- 6.8.1 Planning for good health is high on the agenda, in light of the 'Marmot Review' of health inequalities in England, which concluded that there is 'overwhelming evidence that health and environmental inequalities are inexorably linked and that poor environments contribute significantly to poor health and health inequalities'. Planning for good health can complement planning for biodiversity (green infrastructure) and climate change mitigation (walking/cycling).
- 6.8.2 The NPPF highlights the importance of crime and safety in relation to good design and in the promotion of healthy communities. The emphasis is that good design should create safe accessible environments where 'crime and disorder, and the fear of crime' are decreased and do not impact upon the quality of life or sense of community within a place. Transport infrastructure should provide safe options for all road users and enable minimal conflict between road users especially traffic and cyclists or pedestrians.

6.9 Transport

- 6.9.1 The NPPF notes that transport and travel policies will have an important role in 'contributing to wider sustainability and health objectives'. It calls for the transport system to be balanced 'in favour of sustainable transport', with developments to be located and designed to facilitate these modes of travel. In order to minimise journey lengths for employment, shopping, leisure and other activities, the NPPF calls for planning policies that aim for 'a balance of land uses'. Wherever practical, key facilities should be located within walking distance of most properties.

⁹ Department for Communities and Local Government (2012) Planning policy for traveller sites [online] available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6078/2113371.pdf (Accessed 23 March 2015).

6.10 Economy and enterprise

- 6.10.1 The planning system can make a contribution to building a strong, responsive economy by 'ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure'. The NPPF also emphasises the need to:
- Capitalise on 'inherent strengths', and meet the 'twin challenges of global competition and of a low carbon future'.
 - Support new and emerging business sectors, including positively planning for 'clusters or networks of knowledge driven, creative or high technology industries'.
 - Support competitive town centre environments, and only consider edge of town developments where they have good access and there will not be detrimental impact to town centre viability in the long term.
- 6.10.2 Furthermore, the NPPF states that local plans should support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas and promote the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses.
- 6.10.3 The NPPF also highlights the importance of considering market and economic signals and understanding business needs, including in terms of skills. Employment opportunities in rural areas should be supported, including through support for tourism where appropriate.

7 WHAT IS THE SUSTAINABILITY BASELINE?

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 The baseline review expands on the consideration of problems/issues identified through context review so that they are locally specific. Once the baseline has been established, it becomes possible to assess the likelihood of a proposal resulting in significant effects.

7.2 Air quality

7.2.1 The main input to air pollutants in Bramley is road traffic and, at some times of the year, burning of agricultural crops. However, air quality is generally good in the parish with no significant issues. No locations in the parish are known to be at risk of exceedences of air pollutants and, as such, no locations are currently subject to air quality monitoring.

7.2.2 Anecdotal evidence suggests that air quality may be less than ideal in the village centre when heavy traffic (i.e. a situation whereby there are cars queuing back from the level crossing) coincides with the time when children are walking to or from school (past all of the idling cars).

7.2.3 Whilst no significant air quality issues currently exist in the NP area, new housing and employment provision both within the parish and outside of the parish has the potential to have adverse effects on air quality through increasing traffic flows and associated levels of pollutants such as nitrogen dioxide. Areas of particular sensitivity to increased traffic flows are likely to be within the more congested parts of the village and the routes with highest traffic flows, such as queuing at the C32 railway crossing in Bramley village and lanes around the north side of the village used as 'rat runs' to bypass the level crossing and avoid queues. It is important to note that concerns over traffic have increased over recent years, at the time when Bramley has seen high housing growth, and that the situation may worsen given planning **permissions in place for a total of 315 homes** bordering the Settlement Policy Boundary (well in exceedance of the Basingstoke and Deane target of 200 homes over the period 2011-2029). In addition permission is granted for a further 350 plus homes within Bramley Parish on the southern boundary bordering Basingstoke. In total, this approximates to an expansion of near 40% over the current housing stock for Bramley Parish.

7.3 Biodiversity

7.3.1 No sites internationally designated for their nature conservation interest are present in the NP area. The closest European designated site is the River Itchen SAC, which is approximately 11 km to the south of the NP area.

7.3.2 In terms of nationally designated nature conservation sites, there are no sites of special scientific interest (SSSI) present in the NP area. The closest designated site is the Pamber Forest and Silchester Common SSSI, which is approximately 1 km to the north-east of the plan area.

7.3.3 The Hampshire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) identifies a number of 'priority habitats' that are characteristic of Hampshire and for which Hampshire makes a significant contribution to the UK aims of the Biodiversity Action Plan. Bramley parish contains part of the Biodiversity Priority Area identified in the Basingstoke and Deane Green Infrastructure Strategy 2013. Bow Brook, a tributary of the River Loddon, forms the core of the area identified. The plan area however contains no classified key areas of BAP Priority Habitat, but contains numerous areas of priority habitat including Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh, and Deciduous Woodland.

- 7.3.4 The local countryside supports a wide range of habitats and species, owing to the differing geological influences and important river systems which run through the area. In particular this includes the River Loddon - a high quality chalk river which is, in part, an EU salmonid river containing Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats. The River Loddon crosses the eastern edge of the plan area at the confluence of the Bow Brook tributary, which flows from west to east across the plan area.
- 7.3.5 Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINCs) are sites locally designated for their habitat and/or species interest by the Hampshire Biodiversity Information Centre (HBIC) against a set of agreed criteria.
- 7.3.6 The village of Bramley is adjoined at its southern side by enclosed MOD land used as a training area. This covers approximately 375 ha of which 229 ha lie within the parish of Bramley. This is a relatively undisturbed area of deciduous woodland and scrub. As such it is an important home to wildlife and includes several SINCs.
- 7.3.7 To the north-west of the village lies 42 ha of ancient deciduous woodland (Frith Wood and Davenage Copse), although this woodland is being 'hollowed out' by the National Grid who operate a power distribution centre at the site. Close by lies 3.4 ha of Withy Copse and Little Holdens Copse. These are also designated SINCs, with the area also associated with nearby waterways and seasonal ponds.
- 7.3.8 To the south-east of the village lies the wooded area of Bulls Down Iron Age Fort. This is a scheduled monument and is also a designated SINC. Another designated SINC lies to the west of the Bramley 13 (route 13) right of way (locally known as the Cinder Path) and north of Beckett Gardens, mainly of mainly silver birch and brambles. Half of this site was lost to create a play area for the German Road site.
- 7.3.9 The numerous ancient hedgerows in the NP area provide important habitat for wildlife. They also provide links between the various wooded areas. The railway line running north/south with wooded fringes is another important landscape feature. The hedgerows are mainly ash, blackthorn, hawthorn, willow, sycamore, oak and hazel with significant bramble undergrowth, often with mature trees.
- 7.3.10 In relation to geodiversity, the underlying rocks of the parish form part of the Hampshire Basin, a geological feature in which the rocks slope gently from the north to the south. The oldest rock in the NP area is cretaceous chalk which was formed over 65 million years ago. This chalk is a porous, fine grained limestone which is generally highly permeable and alkaline.
- 7.3.11 Sites of biodiversity importance have the potential to come under increasing pressures from an increase in the area's population and associated development. As outlined many of the SINCs are sensitive and have suffered a loss of habitats with impacts on biodiversity networks due to a reduction in size due to development pressure. This may be exacerbated by the effects of climate change, which has the potential to lead to changes in the distribution and abundance of species and changes to the composition and character of habitats.
- 7.3.12 Biodiversity in the area has the potential to continue to be affected by the economic necessity for intensive farming in the area (as facilitated by the presence of high quality of agricultural land in the plan area). There is however the potential for gains for biodiversity in the farmed landscape to arise as a result of the New Environmental Land Management Scheme (NELMS), which is currently being implemented.
- 7.3.13 Benefits for biodiversity have the potential to arise from the increasing integration of biodiversity considerations within forward planning in Basingstoke and Deane and Hampshire and efforts to improve green infrastructure networks in the area.

7.4 Climate change

- 7.4.1 The outcome of research on the probable effects of climate change in the UK was released in 2009 by the UK Climate Projections (UKCP09) team¹⁰. UKCP09 gives climate information for the UK up to the end of this century and projections of future changes to the climate are provided, based on simulations from climate models. Projections are broken down to a regional level across the UK and are shown in probabilistic form, which illustrate the potential range of changes and the level of confidence in each prediction.
- 7.4.2 As highlighted by the research, the effects of climate change for the South East by 2050 for a medium emissions scenario¹¹ are likely to be as follows:
- the central estimate of increase in winter mean temperature is 2.2°C and an increase in summer mean temperature of 2.8°C; and
 - the central estimate of change in winter mean precipitation is an increase of 16% and summer mean precipitation decrease of 19%.
- 7.4.3 In relation to greenhouse gas emissions, source data from the Department of Energy and Climate Change¹² suggests that the borough has had consistently higher per capita emissions than for Hampshire, the South East and England since 2005. The borough has also seen smaller reductions in emissions per capita between 2005 and 2012 (16.5%) compared to Hampshire (23.3% reduction), the South East (18.3% reduction) and England (17.7% reduction).
- 7.4.4 In terms of flood risk, groundwater and fluvial flooding are issues for the NP area. The Basingstoke and Deane Strategic Flood Risk Assessment¹³ summarises flood risk in Bramley as follows:
- Development in Greenfield areas to the south of the town could be at risk of fluvial flooding from Bow Brook. Within the town there are several areas of localised flooding, at least one of which (B068) may be related to backing up from Bramley Green Stream, although the floodplain itself is not expected to affect Bramley.*
- 7.4.5 Potential development areas have the potential to have a further effect on neighbouring watercourses in Bramley as the additional properties will cause an increase in foul water, after treatment, being discharged from the water treatment plants into the rivers. This will have a further effect on neighbouring watercourses as the additional properties will cause an increase in foul water, after treatment, being discharged from the water treatment plants into the rivers.
- 7.4.6 Several instances of localised flooding have been recorded by the parish council on the north side of Bramley village in recent years due to inadequate drainage. In January and February 2014 the parish council undertook a survey of flooding in and around the village of Bramley, which recorded flooding of the surrounding country roads, particularly Minchens Lane, Cufaude Lane and Oliver's Lane. It also noted waterlogged ground at Strawberry Fields, Oakmead and Minchens Field, and of the stream north of Clift Meadow at maximum capacity where it flows under the railway bridge.

¹⁰ The data was released on 18 June 2009: See: <http://ukclimateprojections.defra.gov.uk/>

¹¹ UK Climate Projections (2009) South East 2050s Medium Emissions Scenario [online] available at: <http://ukclimateprojections.metoffice.gov.uk/22290> (Accessed 5 November 2014)

¹² Department of Energy and Climate Change (2011) Official statistics: Local Authority carbon dioxide emissions [online] available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-emissions-estimates> (Accessed 5 November 2014)

¹³ Halcrow (2010) Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for Local Development Framework [online] available at: <http://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/ENV05> (Accessed 23 March 2015).

- 7.4.7 Climate change has the potential to increase the occurrence of extreme weather events in the NP area, with increases in mean summer and winter temperatures, increases in mean precipitation in winter and decreases in mean precipitation in summer. This is likely to increase the risks associated with climate change (including surface water flooding) with an increased need for resilience and adaptation.
- 7.4.8 In terms of climate change mitigation, per capita emissions are likely to continue to decrease as energy efficiency measures, renewable energy production and new technologies become more widely adopted. However road transport and domestic sources are likely to be increasing contributors proportionally.

7.5 Historic environment and landscape

- 7.5.1 The NP area has a rich historic environment. A number of features and areas for the historic environment in the plan area are recognised through historic environment designations. These include listed buildings and scheduled monuments, which are nationally designated, and conservation areas, which are designated at the local level. Historic England is the statutory consultee for certain categories of listed building consent and all applications for scheduled monument consent. The historic environment is protected through the planning system, via conditions imposed on developers and other mechanisms.
- 7.5.2 There is one conservation area located within the plan area: the Bramley and Bramley Green Conservation Area, which was designated in 1983 in recognition of its recognition of its special architectural and historic interest. A conservation appraisal was carried out for the area in 2004.¹⁴ The conservation area is divided into two – the historic village centre of Bramley and Bramley Green, the latter is one mile east of the centre but is considered part of the village. The historic village centre developed around the distinctive shape of a horseshoe that skirts around the grade I listed 12th century St. James' Church. To the eastern end of the village is Bramley Green, which has developed along the edge of the common and has now been joined to the historic village of Bramley by residential development around the railway station.
- 7.5.3 The NP area contains numerous listed buildings. In this context Bramley village includes a number of notable historic buildings, 11 of which are included in the national list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest. Bramley Green was more sparsely developed and contains two listed buildings: Beech Farm Cottages and the Granary at Green Farm. Three other listed buildings are located around the junction of The Street and Minchens Lane in the vicinity of Stocks Farm. The Hampshire Archaeology and Historic Buildings Record lists 182 items of historical and/or archaeological interest in the parish.¹⁵
- 7.5.4 The old centre of Bramley around the church still has an atmosphere of 'Old Bramley' with the grade II listed buildings in the area of St. James' Church, which is grade I listed. Bramley Green to the east still gives the atmosphere of a village with open spaces. Developments along the linear village bordering the C32 are hidden from view with trees and do not interfere with the open protected views out of the Green to open countryside and the protected views surrounding the church.

¹⁴ Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council (2004) Conservation Area Appraisal - Bramley and Bramley Green [online] available at: <http://www.basingstoke.gov.uk/content/page/33782/Conservation%20Area%20Appraisal%20for%20Bramley%20and%20Bramley%20Green.pdf> (Accessed 25 April 2015).

¹⁵ Hampshire County Council (2015) Hampshire Archaeology and Historic Buildings Record [online] available at: <http://historicenvironment.hants.gov.uk/AHBSearch.aspx> (Accessed 28 April 2015).

- 7.5.5 The historic village of Bramley and Bramley Green are characterised by a range of building materials typical of this part of Hampshire. The palette of historic building materials comprises red brick walls, with some older properties being timber framed with brick infill; others have tile hung facades with scalloped bands and rendered or painted brickwork. Roof materials are red clay tiles, thatch or slate. Casement windows are more prevalent than sash windows; a few buildings have cast iron casements with geometrical patterns. Large corbelled and fluted chimney stacks are a feature of some of the more prominent older buildings.
- 7.5.6 Scheduled monuments are sites of national importance and are protected by the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. According to the National Heritage List for England, there are two scheduled monuments in the NP area, comprising Bulls Down camp to the immediate south-east of the village and the moated site, west of Cufaude Farm.
- 7.5.7 Since 2008, Historic England (formerly English Heritage) has released an annual Heritage at Risk Register. The Heritage at Risk Register highlights the grade I and grade II* listed buildings, and scheduled monuments, conservation areas, wreck sites and registered parks and gardens in England deemed to be 'at risk'. The 2013 Heritage at Risk Register¹⁶ highlighted that there are no features or areas deemed to be at risk in the NP area.
- 7.5.8 It should be noted that not all of the area's historic environment resource is subject to statutory designations, and non-designated features comprise a large part of what people have contact with as part of daily life – whether at home, work or leisure. For example, although not listed, many buildings and areas are of historic interest, and which are seen as important by local communities. Examples of these in the plan area are likely to include parks and the wider historic landscape. Undesignated actual or potential archaeological finds in the area are also of significance.
- 7.5.9 The village is located between contrasting landscapes. To the north there is an area of open clay farmland which rises gently towards an area of farmland and woodland. To the south there is a mosaic landscape of irregularly shaped fields, used for grazing in the lower lying areas and mixed farming on the higher, drier ridges and slopes, and woodland including semi-natural and forestry plantations. Bramley Green is an open area, which reinforces the rural, low density character of the village. None of the parish is designated as green belt.
- 7.5.10 New development areas in the NP area have the potential to impact on the fabric and setting of cultural heritage assets. This includes through inappropriate design and layout. It should be noted, however, that existing historic environment designations and Local Plan policies will offer a degree of protection to cultural heritage assets and their settings.
- 7.5.11 New development has the potential to lead to incremental but small changes in landscape and townscape character and quality in and around the plan area. This includes from the loss of landscape features and visual impact. There are also likely to be potential effects on landscape/townscape character and quality in the vicinity of the road network due to an incremental growth in traffic flows.

¹⁶ Heritage at Risk Register (2013), <http://risk.english-heritage.org.uk/register.aspx> [accessed 10/12/14]

7.6 Land, soil and water resources

- 7.6.1 The Agricultural Land Classification classifies land into five main grades (plus 'non-agricultural' and 'urban'), where Grades 1 to 3a are the 'best and most versatile' land and Grades 3b to 5 are of poorer quality. In terms of the location of classified agricultural land, Grade 3b land of moderate quality is located around Chineham at the southern edge of the plan area. Most of the agricultural land in the parish is graded as 'Good' to 'Moderate' in quality in DEFRA's Classification of Agricultural Land¹⁷. There are some areas of 'Very Good' quality agricultural land just to the north-east of the village, south of Oliver's Lane to the west and east of Folly Lane. Bramley village has agricultural land on its northern, western and eastern side, with the MoD-owned Bramley Camp on its southern side. This land south of Bramley village is classified as non-agricultural land. To the north of the village there is an area of open clay farmland which rises gently towards an area of farmland and woodland.
- 7.6.2 There is no Household Waste and Recycling Centre in the NP area. The nearest is located in Basingstoke off Wade Road.
- 7.6.3 The main watercourse in the parish is the Bow Brook, a tributary of the River Loddon, running from west to east through the village. Strategic development in Bramley, as identified in Policy SS5 of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan, would drain to the Sherfield-on-Loddon sewage treatment works, which would discharge into Bow Brook which flows into the River Loddon, downstream from Bramley Village.
- 7.6.4 Groundwater source protection zones (SPZ) have been defined by the Environment Agency in England and Wales to protect groundwater sources such as wells, boreholes and springs that are used for public drinking water supply. The northern edge of the NP area is designated as a total catchment (Zone 3) SPZ.
- 7.6.5 The Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC) requires Member States to identify areas where groundwater has nitrate concentrations of more than 50 mg/l nitrate or is thought to be at risk of nitrate contamination. Areas associated with such groundwater are designated as nitrate vulnerable zones (NVZ) within which, action programmes are required in order to reduce and prevent further nitrate contamination. In this context the north eastern edge of the plan area is designated as a surface water NVZ.
- 7.6.6 In the absence of the plan, a higher proportion of development has the potential to take place on greenfield land. This is especially the case given the greater availability of such land in the plan area and the likely growth in the local population and economy which will make such development attractive. Development in the NP area also has the potential to lead to the loss of some areas of good to moderate agricultural land, including Grade 3a and 3b agricultural land.
- 7.6.7 In terms of water quality, the requirements of the Water Framework Directive are likely to lead to continued improvements to water quality in watercourses in the wider area. Water quality is also likely to continue to be affected by pollution incidents in the area, the presence of non-native species and physical modifications to water bodies.
- 7.6.8 Water availability in the wider area may be affected by regional increases in population and an increased occurrence of drought exacerbated by the effects of climate change.

¹⁷ Department for Farming and Rural Affairs (2011) Agricultural Land Classification Map - London and the South East 2010 [online] available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/141047> (Accessed 17 April 2015).

7.7 Population and communities

- 7.7.1 According to the most recent census data available, in 2011 the total population of the parish of Bramley was 4,233¹⁸. This was an increase of 885 from the 2001 census, or a 26.4% population growth. The rate of growth in Bramley parish is significantly higher than borough, regional and national comparators.
- 7.7.2 The NP area has a significantly higher proportion of individuals across the 0-15 age range than all other comparators, while a lower proportion in the 16-24 age range. There is a higher proportion of the 45-59 age group within the plan area than national, regional and borough averages, and a significantly lower proportion of residents aged 60 and over when compared to Basingstoke and Deane, the South-East and England. There are 623 people aged 60 or over living in the plan area, which is 14.7% of the population.
- 7.7.3 Census statistics which measure deprivation across the four 'dimensions' of deprivation¹⁹ including: any member of a household not a full-time student is either unemployed or long-term sick; education (no person in the household has at least level 2 education, and no person aged 16-18 is a full-time student); health and disability (any person in the household has general health 'bad or 'very bad' or has a long term health problem); and housing (household's accommodation is either overcrowded, with an occupancy rating -1 or less, or is in a shared dwelling, or has no central heating), show that the parish of Bramley has deprivation levels that are significantly lower than borough, regional and national averages (see Figure 7.1).
- 7.7.4 Data from the DCLG indicates that the median selling price of property²⁰ in the borough of Basingstoke and Deane in the fourth quarter of 2012 was £253,337, higher than the 2012 national median of £242,127, but lower than the Hampshire County median of £271,537. The median house selling price in Basingstoke and Deane increased from £225,000 to £254,000 from 2008 to 2011.
- 7.7.5 In terms of the house price to income ratio, which illustrates the multiple of the average income in the area to average house price, the affordability ratio for Basingstoke and Deane in 2013 was 6.89, a decrease from 7.36 in 2010. This is higher than the ratio of 6.72 for England.²¹
- 7.7.6 In comparison with those in Basingstoke and Deane, the South East, and England, a significantly higher proportion of Bramley residents live in housing owned either outright or with a mortgage (73.7% in total), than borough (67.7%), regional (67.6%) or national (63.3%) averages²². Conversely, Bramley has a significantly lower proportion of people in private rented accommodation (6%) than tenure values at borough and national levels.
- 7.7.7 The NP area has similar proportions of social rented tenures (17%) as borough and national averages, which are significantly higher than the regional level (13%). In 2013 there were 6,673 households on local authority housing waiting lists in Basingstoke and Deane, an increase of 595 since 2010.²³ There has been a decrease of 409 households on local authority housing waiting lists in Hampshire as a whole from 2010 to 2013.

¹⁸ Office for National Statistics (2011) Neighbourhood Statistics [online] available at:

<http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/>

¹⁹ ONS (2011) Census 2011, Households by Deprivation Dimensions, 2011 (QS119EW)

²⁰ Government Statistics, Live tables on housing market and house prices, Table 581 Housing market: mean house prices based on Land Registry data, by district, from 1996 (quarterly), [online] available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-housing-market-and-house-prices> (Accessed 6 November 2014)

²¹ Government Statistics, Live tables on housing market and house prices, Table 577: ratio of median house price to median earnings by district, from 1997, [online] available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-housing-market-and-house-prices> (Accessed 6 November 2014)

This data is not available at ward or parish level.

²² ONS (2011) Census 2011, Tenure - Households, 2011 (QS405EW)

²³ DCLG (2012) Statistical data set 'Live tables on rents, lettings and tenancies'. Table 600: numbers of households on local authorities' housing waiting lists, by district: England 1997 to 2013.

- 7.7.8 The population of the plan area is generally well qualified, with 41.3% of residents aged 16 and above having at least a Level 4 Qualification²⁴. This is significantly higher than the borough level (30.5%), regional (29.9%) and national (27.4%) averages²⁵. Significantly less people have no qualifications (10.5%) than borough (17.3%), regional (19.1%) and national values (22.5%) averages.
- 7.7.9 The population of the NP area is likely to continue to grow and age. The suitability (e.g. size and design) and affordability of housing for local requirements depends on the implementation of appropriate housing policies through the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan. Unplanned development may have wider implications in terms of transport and access to infrastructure, or the natural environment.

7.8 Health and well-being

- 7.8.1 General health across the parish is broadly favourable compared to regional and national averages, and slightly less favourable than Basingstoke and Deane averages. In this context 56.1% of people reported that they were in ‘very good’ health²⁶, which is significantly higher than borough, regional and national averages. Likewise the proportion of people in ‘very bad health’ is slightly lower than borough, regional and national averages.
- 7.8.2 4.4% of residents of Bramley parish reported that they were limited ‘a lot’ with day to day activities due to long-term health problems or disabilities, with 6% or people limited ‘a little’. The levels of long term health and disability²⁷ in Bramley are significantly lower than borough, regional and national averages.
- 7.8.3 No data exists at the parish level for life expectancy and health indicators; however at the borough level the 2013 Health Profile²⁸ shows that life expectancy in Basingstoke and Deane is 80.8 for men and 83.0 for women; above the national average of 73.8 and 79.3, respectively. Life expectancy is 6.7 years lower for men and 4.7 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Basingstoke and Deane than in the least deprived areas. Local priorities in Basingstoke and Deane include lifestyle risks, healthy ageing, and mental health.
- 7.8.4 The population of the plan area is predicted to grow and age in the future. This will place pressure on existing health and community facilities that are likely to face greater demand from residents. Obesity is also seen as an increasing issue by health professionals, and one that will contribute to significant health impacts on individuals, including increasing the risk of a range of diseases, including heart disease, diabetes and some forms of cancer.

7.9 Transport

- 7.9.1 The main route through the NP area is the C32, which connects the plan area with Pamber End, Little London and the A340 to the west and Sherfield-on-Loddon and the A33 to the east.

²⁴ Level 4 and above qualifications cover: Degree (BA, BSc), Higher Degree (MA, PhD, PGCE), NVQ Level 4-5, HNC, HND, RSA Higher Diploma, BTEC Higher Level, Professional Qualifications (Teaching, Nursing, Accountancy).

²⁵ ONS (2011) Census 2011, Qualifications and Students (KS501EW)

²⁶ ONS (2011) Census 2011, General Health (QS302EW)

²⁷ ONS (2011) Census 2011 , Long-Term Health Problem or Disability, 2011 (QS303EW)

²⁸ Public Health England (2013) Health Profile 2013 [online] available at:

<http://www.apho.org.uk/resource/view.aspx?RID=50215&SEARCH=basingstoke%20and%20deane&SPEAR> (accessed 6/11/2014)

- 7.9.2 The NP area is well connected by rail. Bramley railway station is located on the Reading to Basingstoke line with direct First Great Western services every half hour between Reading and Basingstoke. Basingstoke station is approximately 8 km from Bramley village and is located on the main London Waterloo to Southampton / Bournemouth / Weymouth line, the London Waterloo to Salisbury / Exeter line and the Cross Country Trains line to Oxford, Birmingham and the north of England. Direct services include to Winchester (15 minutes), Reading (16 minutes), Andover (16 minutes), Woking (18 minutes), Southampton (33 minutes), Salisbury (35 minutes), Oxford (46 minutes), London Waterloo (46 minutes), Bournemouth (approximately one hour) and Birmingham (approximately two hours).
- 7.9.3 While Bramley has passenger services every half hour in each direction (i.e. to Basingstoke or Reading) the number of trains going through Bramley (which include local, cross country, freight, and empty running trains) can be anything up to 200 per day²⁹. The line is the only route connecting Southampton to the north. If the line was electrified in the future, rail traffic would be likely to increase. Immediately to the north of Bramley station there is a level crossing (with the C32, Sherfield Road). This level crossing causes considerable delay with anecdotal evidence suggesting that during the day the level crossing is closed to road traffic for an average of 29 minutes every hour. This can cause considerable congestion as road traffic, cyclists and pedestrians are forced to wait for the level crossing to reopen.
- 7.9.4 Bramley is connected by bus route 14 to Basingstoke (Chineham Shopping Centre), Little London, Tadley, Pamber Heath, Sherfield Park, Sherfield-on-Loddon and Silchester. Journey times to Basingstoke are approximately 30 minutes from Bramley, approximately every hour. There is no service on Sundays or public holidays.
- 7.9.5 Figure 7.1 shows the availability of cars and vans in the NP area. The proportion of households with no access to a car/van is significantly lower than borough, regional and national averages, whilst the proportion of the population with two or more cars/vans is significantly higher. The proportion of households with three or more vehicles is largely in line with all comparators. High car ownership in the NP area reflects the relative affluence of the plan area and its rural nature.

²⁹ Bramley Parish Council (2012) Living with our Level Crossing [online] available at: <http://www.bramleypc.co.uk/noticeboard/65-living-with-our-level-crossing> (Accessed 23 March 2015).

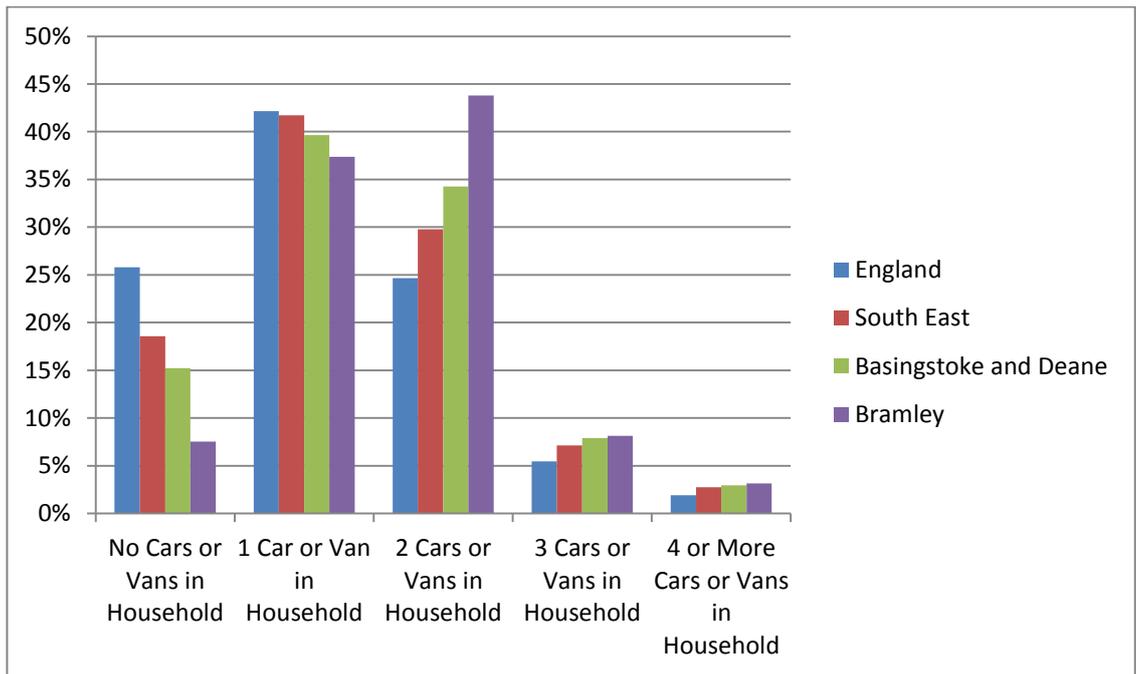


Figure 7.1: Car and van ownership³⁰

7.9.6

Figure 7.2 shows the method of travel to work for residents in the plan area, compared with borough, regional and England averages. As highlighted by the figure, the proportion of people who travel to work by foot in Bramley is lower than all comparators. Conversely, a higher proportion of people travel to work by train than all comparators. Fewer proportions of people travel to work by bus or bicycle than all other comparable areas. A significantly higher proportion of people travel to work by car or van than borough, regional or national averages. More people in Bramley work from home than other comparators.

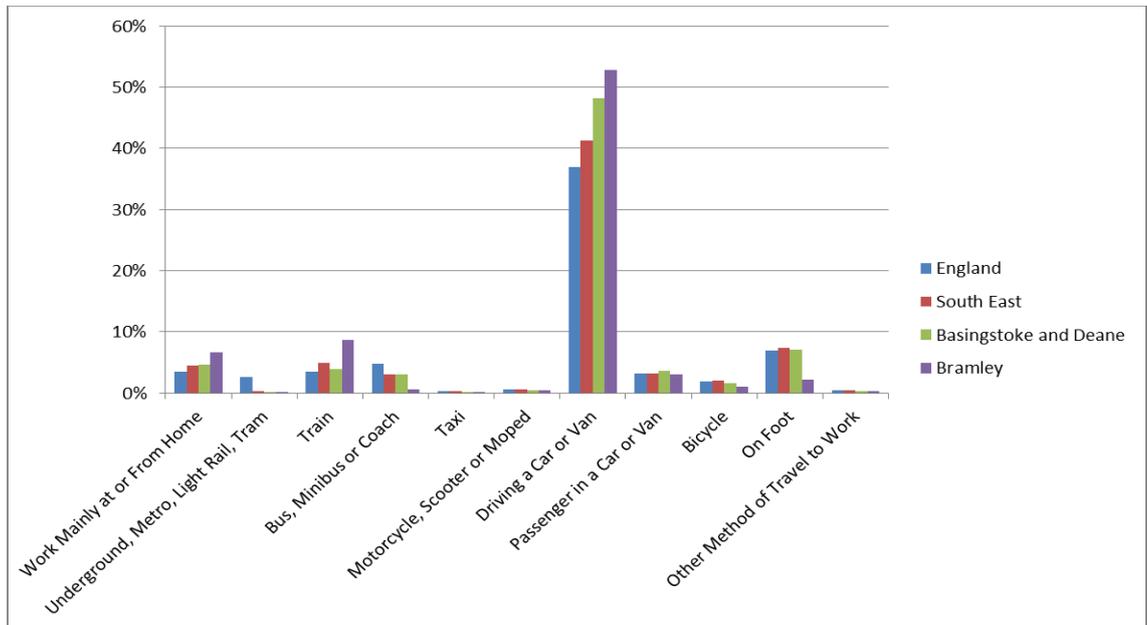


Figure 7.2: Method of travel to work³¹

³⁰ ONS (2011) Census 2011, Car or Van Availability (QS416EW)

³¹ ONS (2011) Census 2011, Method of Travel to Work (QS701EW)

7.9.7 An increase in the NP area’s population has the potential to lead to increased traffic and congestion. This has the potential to be at least in part mitigated by measures outlined in the Local Plan and the Hampshire Local Transport Plan. It is important to note that concerns over traffic have increased over recent years, at the time when Bramley has seen high housing growth, and that the situation may worsen given planning **permissions in place for a total of 315 homes** bordering the Settlement Policy Boundary (well in exceedance of the Basingstoke and Deane target of 200 homes over the period 2011-2029). There is also a concern that the down time of the barrier is likely to increase, with more freight traffic, subsequent to electrification of the line. This could mean worsened traffic congestion.

7.10 Economy and enterprise

7.10.1 As Figure 7.3 illustrates, economic activity rates in the plan area are slightly higher than borough, regional and national averages. Rates of full-time employment in Bramley (49.7%) are higher than across Basingstoke and Deane (47.9%), both being significantly higher than regional (40.5%) and national (38.6%) rates. Rates of part-time employment in Bramley are also higher than comparators.³²

7.10.2 Rates of self-employment (with employees) are broadly in line with borough, regional and national level, with a higher percentage of part time sole traders (3.2%) in the NP area than other comparable areas. The proportion of full time sole traders (5.2%) is largely in line with borough values, but below regional and national values. The proportion of residents who are unemployed is lower than borough, regional and national averages. The proportion of people retired (10.3%) in the plan area is significantly lower than borough (12.6%), regional (13.7%) and national (13.7%) averages.

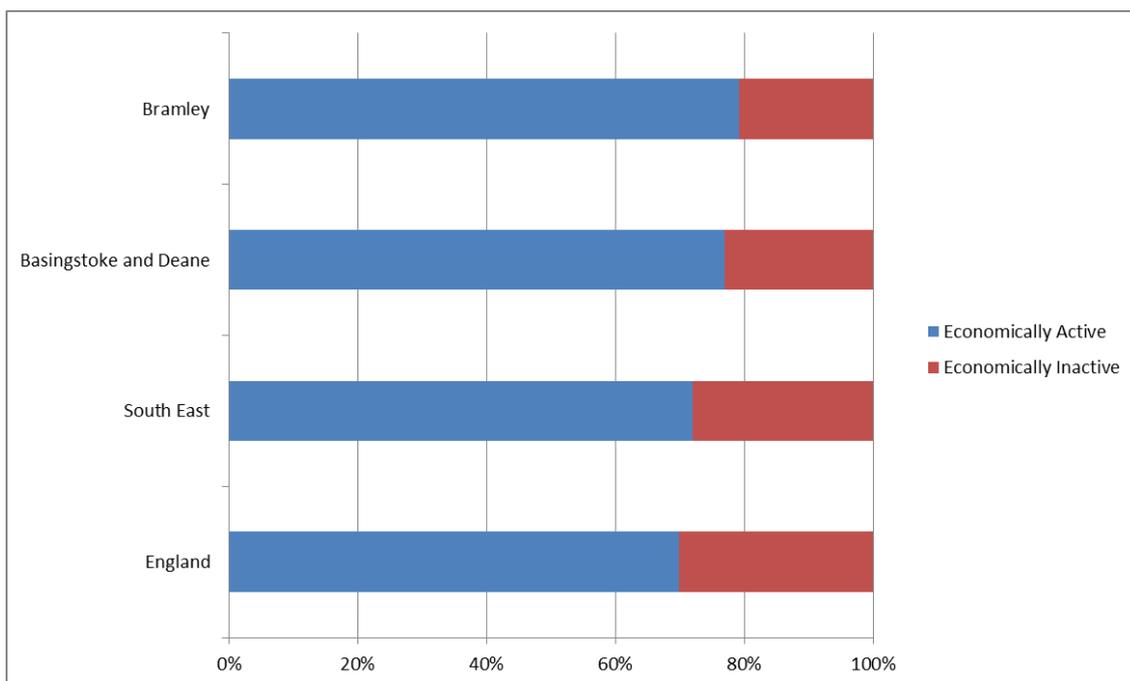


Figure 7.3: Economic activity of residents aged 16-74

³² ONS (2011) Census 2011, Economic Activity (QS601EW)

7.10.3 Figure 7.4 shows the highest level of qualification attained by residents in Bramley, compared with Basingstoke and Deane, South East and England averages. In this context the plan area has a highly qualified population compared to borough, regional and national averages, with 41.3% of working-age residents of the plan area qualified to NVQ level four or above.³³ Likewise, there are a significantly lower proportion of residents in Bramley parish (10.5%) that have no qualifications, when compared with borough (17.3%), regional (19.1%) and national averages (22.5%).

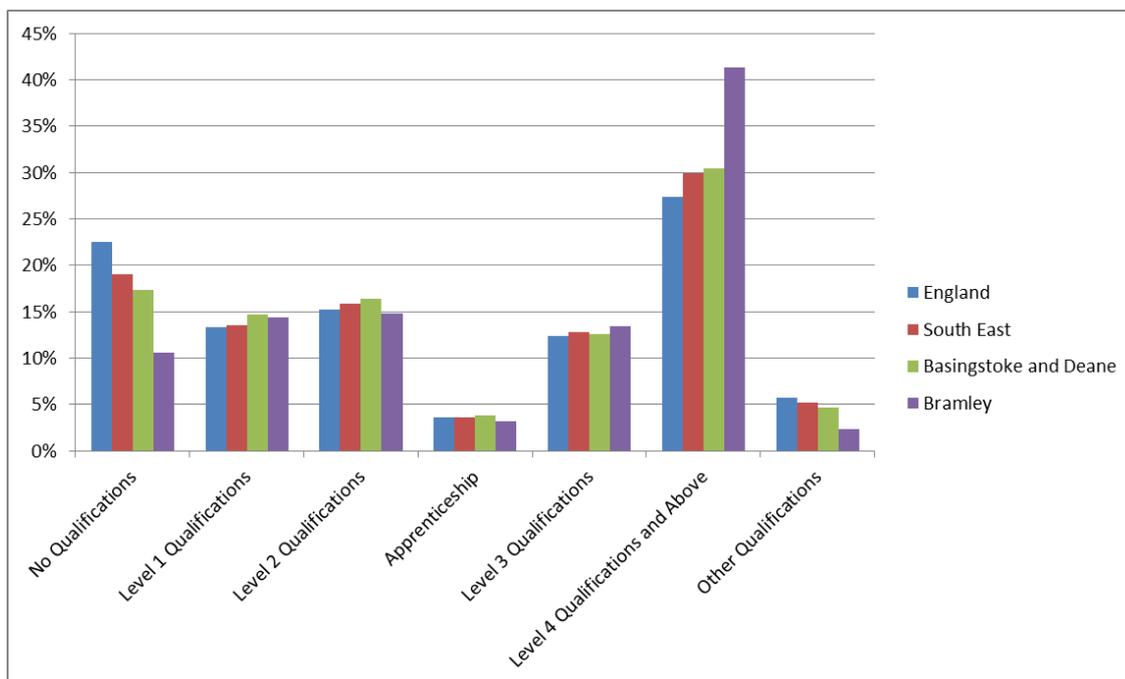


Figure 7.4: Highest level of qualification³⁴

7.10.4 Figure 7.5 shows the occupation of working-age residents. Overall, the occupation profile for Bramley is largely similar to borough, regional and national averages, with some notable exceptions. The plan area has larger proportions of people working in ‘financial and insurance activities’, ‘information and communications’, ‘public administration and defence; compulsory social insurance’ and ‘professional, scientific and technical activities’. Conversely, the plan area has lower proportions of workers in ‘arts, entertainment and recreation’, ‘wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motor cycles’, and ‘construction’.

³³ Level 4 qualifications include bachelor’s degrees, NVQs at Level 4, HNDs and HNCs.

³⁴ ONS (2011) Census 2011, Highest Level of Qualification (QS501EW).

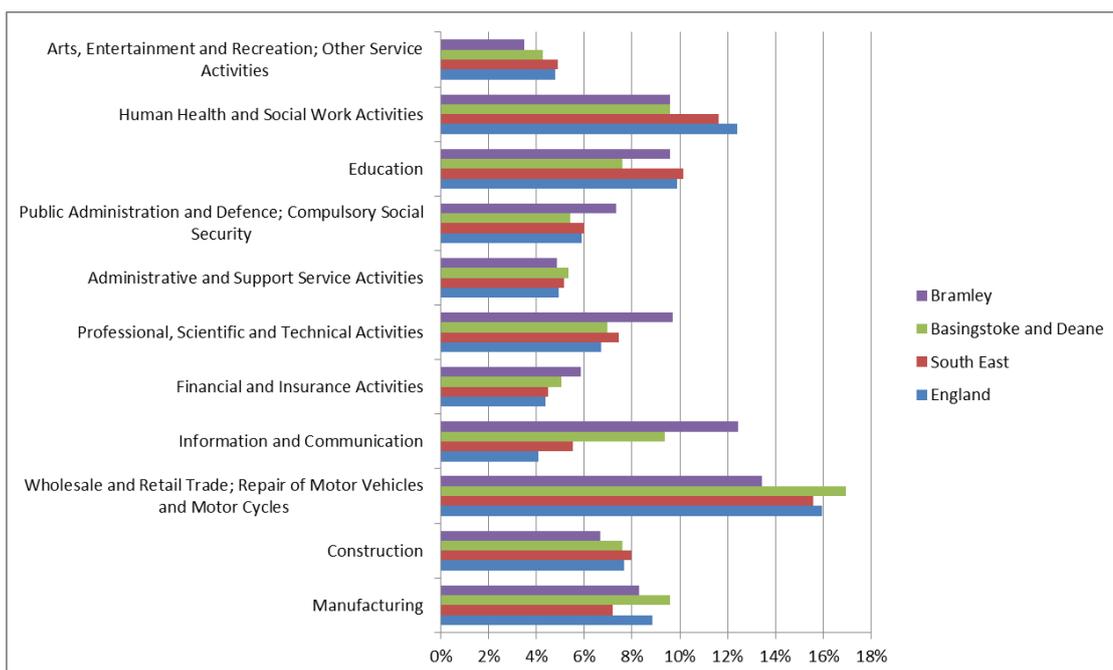


Figure 7.5: Employment amongst residents aged 16 to 74³⁵

7.10.5

In the future, there will be an increased demand for services and facilities in the plan area with population growth. Increased economic activity in Basingstoke may provide economic opportunities for those living in Bramley.

³⁵ ONS (2011) Industry 2011 (QS605EW)

8 WHAT ARE THE KEY ISSUES / OBJECTIVES THAT SHOULD BE A FOCUS OF SEA?

8.1.1 Drawing on the review of the sustainability context and baseline, the SEA Scoping Report (2015) was able to identify a concise list of sustainability ‘objectives’ for each of the nine sustainability topics used as the basis for scoping.

8.1.2 The sustainability objectives are listed in Table 8.1, which also presents a range of decision-making prompts alongside each objective. These objectives and decision-making prompts provide a methodological framework to guide the appraisal of alternatives / the draft plan.

Table 8.1: The SEA framework

Topic	Sustainability objective	Will the policy...
Air quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimise air pollution and maintain good air quality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimise air pollution resulting from traffic congestion? Minimise air pollution from other sources? Consider ‘sensitive receptors’ including children?
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect and enhance all biodiversity and geological features. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect and enhance the integrity of the SINCs present in the plan area? Protect and enhance semi-natural habitats? Protect and enhance priority habitats, and the habitat of priority species? Achieve a net gain in biodiversity?
Climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote climate change mitigation in Bramley. Support the resilience of Bramley to the potential effects of climate change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limit the increase in the carbon footprint of the plan area from population growth? Support reduced car dependency and increased walking, cycling and public transport use? Reduce the need to travel? Increase number of new developments meeting sustainable design criteria? Generate energy from low or zero carbon sources? Improve green infrastructure networks in the plan area to support adaptation to the potential effects of climate change? Ensure that no development takes place in areas at higher risk of flooding, taking into the likely effects of climate change into account? Sustainably manage water run-off, ensuring that the risk of flooding is not increased (either within the plan area or downstream) and where possible reduce flood risk?

Topic	Sustainability objective	Will the policy...
Historic environment and landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect, maintain and enhance Bramley’s cultural heritage resource, including its historic environment and archaeological assets. Protect and enhance the character and quality of landscapes and townscapes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preserve and enhance the setting of cultural heritage assets? Conserve and enhance the special interest of the Bramley and Bramley Green Conservation Area? Conserve and enhance the significance of buildings and structures of architectural or historic interest, both designated and non-designated? Protect the historic settlement pattern of the villages and hamlets in the plan area? Conserve and enhance local diversity and distinctiveness? Support access to, interpretation and understanding of the historic environment? Protect and enhance landscape and townscape features? Conserve and enhance archaeological remains, both scheduled and non-scheduled, including historic landscapes?
Land, soil and water resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the more efficient use of land. Promote sustainable waste management solutions that encourage the reduction, re-use and recycling of waste. Use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the use of previously developed land? Avoid the development of the best and most versatile agricultural land, in particular on Grade 3a agricultural land? Reduce the amount of waste produced? Move waste up the waste hierarchy? Maximise opportunities for local management of waste in order to minimise export of waste to areas outside? Encourage recycling of materials and minimise consumption of resources during construction? Support improvements to water quality? Minimise water consumption? Protect groundwater resources?

Topic	Sustainability objective	Will the policy...
Population and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cater for existing and future residents' needs as well as the needs of different groups in the community, and improve equality of access to local, high-quality community services and facilities. Reduce poverty and deprivation and promote more inclusive and self-contained communities. Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing, and ensure an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tackle the causes of poverty and deprivation? Encourage and promote social cohesion and encourage active involvement in community activities? Increase the ability of 'hard-to-reach' groups to influence decisions? Minimise fuel poverty? Maintain or enhance the quality of life of existing residents? Promote the development of a range of high quality, accessible community, cultural and leisure facilities? Improve the availability and accessibility of key local facilities, including specialist services for disabled and older people? Provide an adequate supply of affordable housing? Support the provision of a range of house types / sizes? Meet the needs of all sectors of the community? Provide quality and flexible homes to meet needs? Ensure that best use is made of the existing housing stock? Promote the use of sustainable building techniques, including use of sustainable building materials in construction? Provide housing in sustainable locations that allow easy access to a range of local services and facilities? Achieve minimum housing requirements?
Health and well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the health and well-being of Bramley's residents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote accessibility to a range of leisure, health and community facilities, for all age groups? Encourage healthy lifestyles and reduce health inequalities? Provide and enhance the provision of community access to green infrastructure, in accordance with national standards? Improve access to the countryside for recreation?
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce the need to travel through sustainable patterns of land use and development? Encourage modal shift to more sustainable forms of travel? Enable transport infrastructure improvements?
Economy and enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance the vitality and viability of the NP area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the economy of the NP area and provide access to employment opportunities?

PART 2: WHAT HAS PLAN-MAKING / SEA INVOLVED UP TO THIS POINT?

9 INTRODUCTION TO PART 2

- 9.1.1 The 'story' of plan-making / SEA up to this point is told within this part of the report. The whole 'story' of plan-making (see Box 9.1) is important; however, in light of SEA requirements it is particularly important for this part of the report to explain how development of the draft plan has been informed by the assessment of 'reasonable alternatives'.

Box 9.1: Brief overview of the plan-making steps

Subsequent to circulating a questionnaire to all residents in June 2012 regarding a 'Village Plan' (not taken forward), it was decided to progress a Neighbourhood Plan in early 2013. Early plan-making steps, undertaken in order to gather evidence and generate understanding, included the following:

- a 'Marmite Quiz' in March 2013 to determine what residents felt was good, bad and needs to change in Bramley;
- a questionnaire circulated to residents in the village in June 2013 asking for a ranking on certain issues;
- a series of questionnaires completed by residents, community groups and school children between June and September 2013 on housing preferences in the parish;
- an open day drop-in session in September 2013 to get feedback on where/how 200 dwellings should be accommodated in the village;
- a survey in December 2013 of railway station users, covering commuting patterns, parking issues and, specifically, congestion caused by the C32 level crossing;
- a retail survey in December 2013, also covering parking issues;
- an economy survey in January 2014 of how many residents are employed in Bramley;
- an open day consultation event in March 2014 held by the Parish Council for the public to provide feedback on the proposed 200 unit housing development at Minchens Lane; and
- in May 2014 two open evenings were held where a presentation was made to attendees as to the present position of the NP. A feedback questionnaire was completed by attendees on the aims, objectives and policies of the plan, along with six examples of potential sites, requesting comments.
- In summer 2015, consultation was held on the draft ('pre-submission') plan and Environmental Report.

What has been the focus of alternatives assessment?

- 9.1.2 Since development of the Bramley NP got under way in January 2013, it has been recognised that the housing development is the key issue for the area. The answers to the June 2012 Village Plan questionnaire indicated discontent with the growth of Bramley without the complementary increase in infrastructure over the years. Notably:
- 66.7% said "Too much housing in Bramley and want no more".
 - 67.3% said "They lived in Bramley because of the lifestyle/rural location and access to Open Spaces".
 - 40.9% said development would be acceptable so long as the village facilities grow at the same pace.
- 9.1.3 Subsequently, an event was held (the Marmite Quiz) to ask residents how they felt about certain issues. Answers came back from 152 attendees disliking large estates (76%), and liking open views across the Green (98%).
- 9.1.4 Also, a follow-up questionnaire to all households (210 replies) found: 'Timely access to medical services' to be the most important issue locally (62% ranking it 10 out of 10); 'Living in a rural community and having access to open spaces' and 'Commuter access' to be the second most important issues (57% ranking 10 out of 10); and 'Design and location of new developments' to be the third most important issue (50% ranking 10 out of 10).
- 9.1.5 As such, **the policy approach to housing growth** was identified as the key issue warranting formal consideration of alternatives.

Structure of this part of the report

- 9.1.6 This part of the report is structured as follows:
- Chapter 10 Introduces the alternatives that have been a focus of assessment.
 - Chapter 11 Presents alternatives assessment findings.
 - Chapter 12 Explains the reasons for developing the preferred approach (i.e. the draft NP) in-light of alternatives assessment findings.
- 9.1.7 This structure reflects the regulatory requirement to present an assessment of 'reasonable alternatives' as well as 'outline reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with'.

10 REASONS FOR SELECTING THE ALTERNATIVES

10.1 Introduction

10.1.1 In order to introduce the reasonable alternatives - i.e. alternative policy approaches to housing growth - there is a need to explain a timeline of events over the course of 2015/16. Specifically, there is a need to discuss -

- 1) Work undertaken in 2015 to develop, assess and consult upon reasonable alternatives;
- 2) New background understanding - late 2015 / early 2016; and
- 3) Refinement of alternatives in 2016.

10.2 Work undertaken in 2015

10.2.1 Chapter 10 of the May 2015 Environmental Report was the equivalent of this current chapter, in that it presented 'Reasons for selecting the alternatives'. Ultimately, four 'reasonable alternatives' were established:

- Option 1 - low growth within or directly adjacent to existing settlement boundaries
- Option 2 - low growth distant from existing settlement boundaries
- Option 3 - high growth within or directly adjacent to existing settlement boundaries
- Option 4 - high growth distant from existing settlement boundaries

10.2.2 Chapter 11 of the May 2015 Environmental Report then presented an assessment of the alternatives, concluding that:

“Overall, higher growth options (Options 3 and 4) perform relatively poorly in terms of a number of sustainability objectives compared to the two lower growth options. Both higher growth options, as well as Option 2 (lower growth outside the existing settlement boundary), are predicted to have a significant negative effect on transport due to additional traffic this would likely generate and the pressure this would place on the village’s road network which is already under strain. Significant negative environmental effects were also identified as being likely for higher growth development scenarios in relation to the historic environment and landscape. This is due to the likelihood of higher growth development being incompatible with the maintenance of the heritage and landscape values of the village and the surrounding area.

Significant positive effects were only predicted in relation to one topic; for Option 1 in relation to population and communities. This option would provide for some additional housing to meet additional demand while not overwhelming existing community infrastructure (and possibly providing for improvement to community infrastructure).”

10.2.3 Finally, Chapter 10 of the May 2015 Environmental Report stated the Parish Council’s response to the alternatives appraisal. The Parish Council concluded:

“In light of the findings of the results of the four alternatives appraised and the views of the community (particularly as expressed through the questionnaire responses in September/October 2014), the Bramley Parish Council (via the Steering group of the NP) considers that a policy restricting individual development to a maximum of 50 dwellings per site close to the existing settlement boundaries against the alternatives is the preferred policy for the size and location of residential development in the parish.”

10.3 New background understanding - late 2015 / early 2016

10.3.1 Firstly, detailed comments were received from Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council in relation to the Environmental Report, essentially questioning the ability of the Parish Council to justify their preferred housing strategy on the basis of the alternatives appraisal work completed. Most notably - referring to the possibility of numerous sites coming forward that are individually small and not likely to give rise to significant impacts, but which may give rise to a significant impact in-combination - the Council stated:

"[Taking into account] the housing sites that may be available in and around Bramley, do the reasonable alternatives... provide the opportunity for the SEA to explore the potential cumulative environmental impacts?"

10.3.2 Secondly, the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan was found to be sound by the examining Planning Inspector, with the Inspector's Report:

A) Finding that the 'approximately 200 homes' allocation to Bramley should be modified to become 'at least 200 homes', stating that: *"Bramley station... has good links to Basingstoke, Reading and London, and a potentially excellent link to Crossrail. This is an important consideration in determining the dwelling provision in the village on sustainability grounds, and on balance I consider that the provision for Bramley should not revert to 'approximately' as in the submitted Plan."*

B) Stating that: *"It seems reasonable that a parish/town council could set a housing total close to the figure in the policy, and certainly a figure which is not significantly greater."*

10.3.3 The implication of (A) is that there is a somewhat increased likelihood of successful planning applications in the future. The 200 home target has already been met, and indeed exceeded by 58% (with planning permissions in place for a total of 315 homes), and so under 'normal circumstances' it is unlikely that further housing would be approved.³⁶ However, under a scenario whereby the Council is found to have a shortfall of available/deliverable land for housing (i.e. a 'five year land supply') the Council's policy would be considered out-of-date. In this scenario, and given use of the term 'at least' rather than 'approximately', Bramley might be judged to be an appropriate location for additional growth.

10.3.4 The implication of (B) is that the possibility of the Bramley NP 'setting a housing total' arises. The NP might attempt to simply determine a total - e.g. 320 or 320 plus a certain amount - however, such an approach might be difficult to justify. Another approach would be for the NP to allocate additional sites, and thereby set a total. A 'housing total' policy would still be considered out-of-date in a scenario whereby the Council cannot demonstrate a five year land supply; however, it would carry some weight in decision-making.

³⁶ The Inspector clarified that the term 'at least' does not equate to an unlimited amount of further development.

10.4 Refining the reasonable alternatives in 2016

10.4.1 The Council's preferred housing policy was well established by 2016, and so it was recognised that there was quite simply a need to consider alternatives to that policy, with a view to ensuring that the policy is sufficiently thought-through and justified.

10.4.2 Specifically, the preferred policy approach stood as (*emphasis added*):

Policy H1: New Housing Development

When it can be satisfactorily demonstrated that the Borough of Basingstoke and Deane does not have a five year housing land supply, new housing development, beyond that allocated in the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan currently in force, will be supported in Bramley parish up to a maximum of 50 dwellings for each individual development site immediately adjoining the Bramley Settlement Policy Boundary, providing it can be shown that such proposals will enable local housing need to be met (see Policy H2) and can satisfy other relevant policies in this Neighbourhood Plan and in the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan.

In all other circumstances new housing development outside and not immediately adjoining the Bramley Settlement Policy Boundary will only be supported if it is in accordance with relevant Local Plan policies for new housing in the countryside. The Bramley Settlement Policy Boundary is shown in Illustration 6a.

All new housing developments must make a proportionate contribution to the provision or improvement of local services, facilities and infrastructure, in order to maintain or improve upon levels of provision extant in 2016, including the provision of public green space within the site concerned in the case of developments of 10 or more dwellings.

10.4.3 The possibility of considering quite radically different policy approaches - e.g. a policy approach that sets a housing growth 'total' - was considered, but ultimately dismissed.

10.4.4 Rather, it was determined appropriate to focus alternatives appraisal on the matter addressed through the bold text above, namely the matter of: the **size of individual schemes** that might feasibly be acceptable.

10.4.5 Three reasonable alternatives were established:

- 1) Permit only schemes of up to 25 homes
- 2) Permit only schemes of up to 50 homes
- 3) Permit only schemes of up to 100 homes

10.4.6 It was determined that these were the 'reasonable alternatives' to assess, and publish for consultation.

11 ALTERNATIVES ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

11.1 Appraisal methodology

- 11.1.1 For each of the options, the appraisal identifies and evaluates 'likely significant effects' on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability topics / issues identified through scoping (see Part 1) as a methodological framework.
- 11.1.2 Effects are predicted taking into account the criteria presented within Regulations.³⁷ So, for example, account is taken of the duration, frequency and reversibility of effects as far as possible. These effect 'characteristics' are described within the appraisal as appropriate. The potential for 'cumulative' effects is also considered.
- 11.1.3 Every effort is made to predict effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the high level nature of the options and the fact that they relate to one issue to be addressed by the plan amongst many.
- 11.1.4 The ability to predict effects accurately is also limited by understanding of the baseline (now and in the future). In light of this, there is a need to make considerable assumptions regarding how options would be implemented 'on the ground' and what the effect on particular receptors would be. Where there is a need to rely on assumptions, this is made explicit within the appraisal text.
- 11.1.5 In many instances, given reasonable assumptions, it is not possible to predict likely significant effects, but it is possible to comment on the merits of an option in more general terms. This is helpful, as it enables a distinction to be made between the alternatives even where it is not possible to distinguish between them in terms of 'significant effects'.

11.2 Appraisal findings

- 11.2.1 The table below presents appraisal findings in relation to the alternatives introduced above. Within each row (i.e. for each topic) the columns to the right hand side seek to both categorise the performance of each scenario in terms of 'significant effects' (using red / green shading) and also **rank** the alternatives in order of preference. Options are ranked numerically in accordance of rank of preference, with stars highlighting options that are likely to perform best.

(1) Permit only schemes of up to 25 homes (2) Permit only schemes of up to 50 homes (3) Permit only schemes of up to 100 homes (4) Policy supporting housing with no restriction on size				
Topic	Discussion of <u>significant effects</u> (and discussion of <u>relative merits</u> in more general terms)	Rank of performance / effect categorisation		
		Opt 1	Opt 2	Opt 3
Air quality	Air quality in Bramley is generally considered to be good although traffic congestion, particularly around the C32 railway level crossing may be causing reduced air quality. It is difficult to differentiate the alternatives, as traffic congestion will primarily relate to the quantum and location of growth, rather than the type of scheme that are supported. It might be suggested that larger schemes may lead to greater potential to deliver road infrastructure upgrades that in turn limit traffic congestion; however, it is difficult to draw this assumption with any certainty.	=	=	=
Biodiversity	The NP area does not contain any internationally or nationally designated sites of biodiversity or geodiversity importance, although there are several	=	=	=

³⁷ Schedule 1 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

Topic	Discussion of <u>significant effects</u> (and discussion of <u>relative merits</u> in more general terms)	Rank of performance / effect categorisation		
		Opt 1	Opt 2	Opt 3
	<p>Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), patches of ancient woodland and historic hedgerows.</p> <p>It is difficult to differentiate the alternatives, as biodiversity impacts will primarily relate to the quantum and location of growth, rather than the type of scheme that are supported.</p> <p>It might be suggested that larger schemes may lead to greater potential to deliver open space and habitat creation/enhancement; however, it is difficult to draw this assumption with any certainty.</p>			
Climate change	<p>A primary consideration is the need to minimise car dependency, i.e. encourage more trips to be made by walking, cycling or public transport.</p> <p>In this regard, It is difficult to differentiate the alternatives, as a primary consideration is the quantum (given that Bramley is a rural location, where there is inevitably car dependency) and location of growth (e.g. proximity to the village centre), rather than the type of scheme that are supported.</p> <p>It might be suggested that larger schemes may lead to greater potential to support new/enhanced bus services, and walking/cycling infrastructure; however, it is difficult to draw this assumption with any certainty.</p>	=	=	=
Historic environment and landscape	<p>There is a need to avoid impacts to the Bramley and Bramley Green Conservation Area, and more generally to the rural village character. Bramley Parish Council has undertaken Character Appraisals of the various distinct parts of the village, with a notable conclusion being that the size and density of the most recent development (German Road/Kirby Drive, 271 dwellings) is not in keeping with Bramley’s rural village character; and this assessment is supported by consultation findings. The community’s view, expressed in responses to consultation, is that large housing schemes put much valued rural character of Bramley at risk.³⁸</p> <p>On this basis, it is fair to conclude that a policy supporting only smaller developments is to be supported, from a historic environment and landscape perspective. However, there is considerable uncertainty, as under the unlikely scenario whereby Bramley receives large scale additional growth it might be that one large scheme would be preferable to several small. As such, significant effects are not predicted.</p>		2	3
Land, soil and water resources	<p>The ‘Agricultural Land Classification - Provisional (England)’ dataset (which is very low resolution) indicates predominantly ‘grade 3’ agricultural land surrounding Bramley, with some possibility of higher quality ‘grade 2’ land. The dataset does not distinguish between ‘grade 3a and grade 3b’.³⁹</p> <p>It is not possible to differentiate the alternatives, as the degree of impact will relate to the quantum and location of growth, rather than the type of scheme that are supported.</p> <p>Water resource issues are less relevant. There are not notable sensitivities locally that mean that the water environment is a constraint to any reasonably foreseeable growth scenario.</p>	N/a	N/a	N/a
Population and communities	<p>Bramley has more limited facilities than might be expected for a village of its size, with no dentist, vet, library or bank. Through community engagement it is understood that the following facilities, services and amenities are needed or desired by residents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extension / improvements to the medical practice 	3	2	

³⁸ A dedicated community consultation was undertaken in 2014 to determine what size of future housing development would be considered most appropriate by the local community. The majority view of local people (229 respondees - 51%) was that future housing developments should be up to a maximum of 50 new dwellings in each individual proposal.

³⁹ The National Planning Policy Framework classifies ‘best and most versatile’ agricultural land as that which is either grade 1, grade 2 or grade 3a. In order to determine agricultural land classification with accuracy there is a need to apply a site level survey, and surrounding Bramley very little land has been surveyed to this level of accuracy (see magic.gov.uk).

Topic	Discussion of <u>significant effects</u> (and discussion of <u>relative merits</u> in more general terms)	Rank of performance / effect categorisation		
		Opt 1	Opt 2	Opt 3
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additions / improvements to the footpath and cycle networks • Controlled short term car parking near the village centre • User safe access across the railway at all times • Additional pedestrian crossings on the C32 road • Bowling green • Skate park • Improvements / extensions to the village hall • Improvements to the road network by-passing the village <p>With relatively few facilities in Bramley, and the lack of regular bus service, there is a reliance on cars to access the type of facilities which are provided in the other villages. This is an issue for those with limited access to a car.</p> <p>It is difficult to differentiate the alternatives, as a primary consideration is the quantum of growth (given that growth can support upgrades to community infrastructure locally) and location of growth (proximity to the village centre), rather than the type of scheme that are supported. It might be suggested that larger schemes may lead to greater potential to support upgrades to community infrastructure; however, it is difficult to draw this assumption with any certainty.</p> <p>However, there is one other consideration - namely the need to deliver affordable housing. Policy is set to require that new housing schemes include some affordable housing; however, viability considerations inevitably also 'come into play', meaning that larger (more viable) developments are better placed in this respect. On this basis, it is possible to conclude that Option 3 is best performing; however, it is not possible to conclude significant effects. It may well be that the Local Plan policy on affordable housing can be realised in practice through small schemes.</p>			
Health and well-being	See discussion above in relation to walking/cycling and access to services/facilities. It is difficult to differentiate the alternatives with certainty.	=	=	=
Transport	See discussion above in relation to traffic congestion, walking/cycling and use of public transport. It is difficult to differentiate the alternatives with certainty.	=	=	=
Economy and enterprise	It is not possible to differentiate the alternatives with any certainty. In the Bramley context, there is little reason to suggest that larger development would be more likely to be mixed use, i.e. deliver a degree of employment (e.g. space for small start-ups, or work/live units.	=	=	=
<p>Conclusion</p> <p>There is a fairly clear 'trade-off' to be made, in that smaller housing schemes are more likely to be in keeping with the village character of Bramley, whilst larger schemes are more likely to deliver affordable housing and may also be more likely to deliver infrastructure upgrades. There is evidence (e.g. in the form of consultation feedback) to suggest that the former consideration is overriding; however, it is not possible to predict significant effects (recognising that a policy supporting only smaller housing schemes will have limited or no effect on the total quantum of growth, i.e. the number of small schemes that are permitted).</p>				

12 REASONS FOR SELECTING THE PREFERRED APPROACH

12.1 Introduction

12.1.1 This section sets out the Parish Council's reasons for selecting/developing the preferred approach to housing land use subsequent to, and in light of, the alternatives assessment.

12.2 Reasons

12.2.1 As discussed in Section 9, the main feedback from engagement with Bramley's residents was that the number of houses built in and around the village over the past 20 years has had a detrimental effect on the character of the village and has not been accompanied by necessary improvements in village infrastructure and facilities.

12.2.2 At an Open Meeting in September 2013, attendees were shown maps and asked as to where the 200 houses set to be allocated in the Emerging Local Plan should be sited, given potential sites within or bordering the village of large, intermediate and small capacity.

12.2.3 In September/October 2014, residents were invited to complete a questionnaire with examples of large developments, intermediate and small developments, high and low density asking what they considered to be the maximum no of houses per individual proposal/per site in the future would be acceptable in maintaining the rural aspect of Bramley.

12.2.4 Site assessments carried out in May/June 2014 did not highlight any particular site as having a good score against certain criteria, and therefore the steering group ruled out the idea of allocating sites to development. Instead, whilst not ruling out development and knowing that the community did not like large developments that could impact dramatically on the overstretched infrastructure, that some sites within Bramley would take smaller developments, it was decided to ask the question as to what was the acceptable maximum size of development on an individual site.

12.2.5 The results of the September/October 2014 questionnaire was that the majority believed that future housing should be capped at a maximum of 50 new dwellings in each individual development proposal (51% of 452 replies). In addition to this 51 people said zero housing which is unrealistic and not compliant with the local plan, 6 persons wanted maximum of 10 dwellings, 49 persons (11%) preferred maximum of 30 dwellings for each individual housing development. Overall, it was considered that a maximum of 50 new dwellings per development would be in keeping with maintaining the rural aspect of Bramley whilst not overstressing the present infrastructure which is in need of considerable improvement and not restricting overall numbers.

12.2.6 It was considered by many completing the questionnaire that development restricted to this scale would maintain the character and historic values of Bramley. Similarly, smaller scale development would have less impact on the transport network (congestion, road safety and parking), is more environmentally friendly (less pollution, less flooding potential in what is predominantly a flood plain area) than larger scale development.

12.2.7 The appraisal of alternatives (as set out and reported in Chapter 11) is generally supportive of capping at a maximum of 50 new dwellings in each individual proposal. The appraisal highlights that larger developments can bring certain benefits, but in the context of Bramley it is considered that an overriding objective is the need to support only smaller developments that do not adversely affect the rural character of Bramley. 50 home schemes should be 'viable' such that the full quota of affordable housing can be achieved in practice.

12.2.8 In light of the alternatives appraisal and the views of the community (particularly as expressed through the questionnaire responses in September/October 2014), Bramley Parish Council (via the Steering group of the NP) proposes a policy restricting individual development to a maximum of 50 dwellings per site close to the existing settlement boundary.

PART 3: WHAT ARE THE SEA FINDINGS AT THIS STAGE?

13 INTRODUCTION TO PART 3

13.1.1 The aim of this part of the report is to present an assessment of the draft (submission) plan.

14 APPRAISAL OF THE DRAFT (SUBMISSION) PLAN

N.B. Appraisal findings are largely unchanged from those presented in the 2015 Environmental Report.

14.1 Methodology

14.1.1 The assessment identifies and evaluates 'likely significant effects' of the preferred approach on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability topics, objectives and issues identified through scoping (see Part 1) as a methodological framework. To reiterate, the sustainability topics considered are as follows:

- air quality;
- biodiversity;
- climate change;
- historic environment and landscape;
- land, soil and water resources;
- population and communities;
- health and well-being;
- transport; and
- economy and enterprise.

14.1.2 Every effort is made to predict effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the high level nature of the policy approaches under consideration, and limited understanding of the baseline.⁴⁰ Because of the uncertainties involved there is inevitably a need to make assumptions.

14.1.3 Assumptions are made cautiously, and explained within the text. The aim is to strike a balance between comprehensiveness and conciseness/accessibility to the non-specialist. In many instances, given reasonable assumptions, it is not possible to predict significant effects, but it is possible to comment on merits (or otherwise) in more general terms.

14.1.4 It is important to note that effects are predicted taking account of the criteria presented within Schedule 1 of the SEA Regulations.⁴¹ So, for example, account is taken of the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of effects as far as possible. Cumulative effects are also considered. These effect characteristics are described within the assessment as appropriate.

⁴⁰ The implication being that it is difficult, if not impossible, to identify a 'cause-effect relationship' with any certainty.

⁴¹ Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

14.2 Air quality

Sustainability objectives

- Minimise air pollution and maintain good air quality

Relevant NP policies

- Policies **H1** (Housing); **D2** (Design); **T1** (Transport); **E1** (Employment)

Assessment

- 14.2.1 The NP does not contain any policies specifically related to air quality. Indirectly some policies could be seen to address this issue, with Policy H1 requiring all new development to be within or adjoining existing settlement boundaries which will help to limit additional road traffic and associated emissions to air. Also, the Policy H1 requirement that all new housing must be to meet local needs may influence the quantum of housing growth and therefore the traffic / air quality situation.
- 14.2.2 Furthermore, Policy D2 requires that residential development has good access to public transport. Policy T1 promotes the improvement of the footpath and cycleway network and this will also assist to improve the viability of active travel as an alternative to car-based travel. Policy E1 relating to new employment development contains provisions that require no adverse effects from road traffic which would also assist in reducing emissions to air.

Conclusions and recommendations

- 14.2.3 The NP may have minor positive effects on air quality; and there are no recommendations.

14.3 Biodiversity

Sustainability objectives

- Protect and enhance all biodiversity and geological features

Relevant NP policies

- Policies **RE3** and **RE4** (Rural environment)

Assessment

- 14.3.1 The NP contains two rural environment policies that offer general protection to local green spaces (Policy RE3) and the wider natural environment (Policy RE4). Policy RE3 is focussed more on protecting green spaces for amenity reasons but as such spaces can provide ecological habitat, this policy would have some benefit for local biodiversity.
- 14.3.2 Of more direct importance is Policy RE4, which provides a high level of protection to existing trees, hedgerows and woodlands (as identified in Appendix E to the NP). This policy would offer a high level of protection and development must not result in the loss of important trees, hedgerows and woodlands identified in Appendix E. This appendix also identifies the SINCs in the vicinity of the village although the policy does not make direct reference.
- 14.3.3 It is also noteworthy that the NP promotes development within or adjoining the existing settlement boundaries whereas most of the habitats of biodiversity lie outside these settlement boundaries. As such, the pattern of development promoted under the NP will go a long way to avoid negative effects on biodiversity.

Conclusions and recommendations

- 14.3.4 The NP is not predicted to negatively affect biodiversity. It is **recommended** that Policy RE4 might make direct reference to areas designated as SINC.

14.4 Climate Change

Sustainability objectives

- Promote climate change mitigation in Bramley
- Support the resilience of Bramley to the potential effects of climate change

Relevant NP policies

- Policies **H1** (Housing); **D2** (Design); **RE1** (Rural environment); **T1** (Transport)

Assessment

- 14.4.1 The NP does not contain any policies specifically related to climate change. Indirectly, some policies are relevant with Policy H1 requiring all new development to be within or adjoining existing settlement boundaries which will help to limit additional road traffic and associated greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Furthermore, Policy D2 requires that residential development has good access to public transport; and Policy T1 promotes the improvement of the footpath and cycleway network, which should encourage active travel.
- 14.4.2 Policy RE1 relates directly to reducing flood risk and includes clear requirements that development proposals must not increase flood risk on the development site itself or increase flood risk elsewhere. There is a specific requirement for sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).

Conclusions and recommendations

- 14.4.3 The NP policies make appropriate provision for climate change, both in terms of limiting greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change; there are no recommendations.

14.5 Historic environment and landscape

Sustainability objectives

- Protect, maintain and enhance Bramley's cultural heritage resource, including its historic environment and archaeological assets.
- Protect and enhance the character and quality of landscapes and townscapes.

Relevant NP policies

- Policies **H1** (Housing); **D1** and **D2** (Design); **RE2** and **RE3** (Rural environment); **E1** (Employment)

Assessment

- 14.5.1 Policy H1 would restrict the size of individual developments to no more than 50 dwellings. While effects on historic environment and landscape are location specific, in general terms smaller schemes are more likely to be in keeping with the village's historic and landscape values. Furthermore, the containment of development within or adjoining existing boundaries under this policy will have positive effects on landscape values. Finally, the Policy H1 requirement that all new housing must be to meet local needs may influence the quantum of housing growth and therefore support the maintenance of historic character.

14.5.2 Policy D1 would complement this aim by seeking to protect and enhance the rural character of Bramley. This proposed policy covers all factors that would be expected such as the scale and density of development and also includes consideration of certain views (set out in Appendix D). Policy D2 contains a number of sub-policies that would have townscape/landscape benefits. Key sub-policies are (a), (e), (f), (g), (i) and (l). Collectively, it is considered that these sub-policies would have a positive effect.

14.5.3 Landscapes and the historic environment beyond the existing settlement are also given a large degree of protection under Policies RE2 and RE3. Policy RE2 in particular seeks to maintain the area of separation between Bramley and Sherfield on Loddon and prevent coalescence of these two settlements. This policy also specifically protects the scheduled monument of Bulls Down Iron Age Fort. Together with Policy RE3 which protects local green spaces, this policy would likely have a significant positive effect in terms of maintaining landscape and heritage values in the NP area.

Conclusions and recommendations

14.5.4 Overall, the NP is considered to have a **significant positive effect** in terms of the historic environment and landscape. However, there is uncertainty recognising that the plan will not directly influence the total quantum of growth directed to the village. There are no recommendations.

14.6 Land, soil and water resources

Sustainability objectives

- Ensure the more efficient use of land.
- Promote sustainable waste management solutions that encourage the reduction, re-use and recycling of waste.
- Use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner.

Relevant NP policies

- Policies **H1** (Housing); **RE2** (Rural environment)

Assessment

14.6.1 The NP does not contain any policies directly addressing the sustainability objectives. Regarding the efficient use of land, however, the NP policies (particularly Policy H1) very clearly seek to contain growth within or adjoin existing settlement boundaries. Policy RE2 specifically seeks to main the area of separation between Bramley and Sherfield on Loddon. The general thrust of the NP in seeking to contain further development is consider positive in terms of using land efficiently. While the NP does not contain policies specifically covering waste management water resources, these two issues have not been identified as being particularly important to the NP area and are adequately addressed in other policy documents such as the Local Plan.

Conclusions and recommendations

14.6.2 Overall, the NP is considered to have a positive effect in terms of promoting the efficient use of land; there are no recommendations.

14.7 Population and communities

Sustainability objectives

- Cater for existing and future residents' needs as well as the needs of different groups in the community, and improve equality of access to local, high-quality community services and facilities.
- Reduce poverty and deprivation and promote more inclusive and self-contained communities.
- Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing, and ensure an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures.

Relevant NP policies

- Policies **H1** and **H2** (Housing); **CVA1** and **CVA2** (Assets of community value); **T1** (Transport)

Assessment

- 14.7.1 The NP recognises the growth pressures facing the village and that there has been demand for further housing in the past and that this trend is likely to continue. Housing policies H1 and H2 provide specifically for new local housing and Policy H2 in particular is notable in that it seeks to ensure that the housing needs to a wide range of groups within the community are met (e.g. older and younger persons' housing needs etc.). With respect to the sustainability objectives it is considered that Policy H2 would have a significant positive effect.
- 14.7.2 Policies ACV1 and ACV2 seek to protect assets of community value (ACV) such as local shops, the doctors' surgery and the only public house in the village. Retention of local amenities and community infrastructure is considered essential to meeting the needs of existing and future residents of Bramley. It has been noted that, compared to neighbouring villages of Overton and Whitchurch, Bramley suffers from a lack of community infrastructure and that previous development in the village has not always been commensurate with improvement to community infrastructure. Inclusion of existing ACVs under these policies is considered likely to have a significant positive effect.
- 14.7.3 Policy T1 would also assist in encouraging access for pedestrians and cyclists to community facilities such as schools etc. and this would be beneficial.

Conclusions and recommendations

- 14.7.4 Overall, the NP is considered to have a **significant positive effect** in terms of population and communities; there are no recommendations. However, it is recognised that there are potentially some draw-backs to a policy of limiting the size of any individual development scheme to 50 homes - see discussion within Chapter 11, above.

14.8 Health and well-being

Sustainability objective

- Improve the health and well-being of Bramley's residents.

Relevant NP policies

- Policies **CVA1** and **CVA2** (Assets of community value); **D2** (Design); **T1** and **T2** (Transport)

Assessment

- 14.8.1 While the NP is limited in what it can directly influence in terms of health and well-being, it is acknowledged that the built environment can have some influence on these factors. Policies ACV1 and ACV2 seek to protect assets of community value (ACV) many of which are sports and play area facilities. These facilities make an important contribution to encouraging physical activity amongst the village’s residents and their protection is positive in terms of promoting health and well-being. The doctors’ surgery is also included as an ACV which again is a very important community facility.

Conclusions and recommendations

- 14.8.2 Overall, the NP is considered to have a **positive effect** in terms of health and well-being; there are no recommendations.

14.9 Transport

Sustainability objective

- Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.

Relevant NP policies

- Policies **H1** (Housing); **D2** (Design); **T1** and **T2** (Transport)

Assessment

- 14.9.1 Policy H1 requires all new development to be within or adjoining existing settlement boundaries which will help to limit additional road traffic. Also, the Policy H1 requirement that all new housing must be to meet local needs may influence the quantum of housing growth and therefore the traffic situation.
- 14.9.2 Furthermore, Policy D2 requires that residential development has good access to public transport. Policy T1 promotes the improvement of the footpath and cycleway network and this will also assist to improve the viability of active travel as an alternative to car-based travel. Policy T2 seeks to improve road safety in Bramley.
- 14.9.3 The general thrust of the transport policies is positive. The NP does acknowledge, however, that resolution of strategic transport issue, most notably the major problem of road congestion caused by the C32 level crossing cannot be solved by the NP. Given the severe congestion at the level crossing and the parking pressures around the railway station, any further housing development is likely to exacerbate the current problem.

Conclusions and recommendations

- 14.9.4 Minor positive effects are predicted; there are no recommendations in relation to transport.

14.10 Economy and enterprise

Sustainability objective

- Enhance the vitality and viability of the NP area.

Relevant NP policies

- Policies **H1** and **H2** (Housing); **CVA1** and **CVA2** (Assets of community value); **E1** (Employment)

Assessment

- 14.10.1 The housing and ACV policies would, collectively, contribute to improving the viability and vitality of the village. Similarly, Policy E1 provides for development for employment use, provided particular environmental standards are met. Given that the NP does not actively encourage new employment development it is not possible to conclude there will be positive effects.

Conclusions and recommendations

- 14.10.2 No effects are predicted with respect to economy and enterprise; there are no recommendations.

15 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS AT THIS CURRENT STAGE

- 15.1.1 The assessment presented above highlights that the draft NP performs well in terms of many sustainability issues/objectives, with significant positive effects identified as likely in terms of: historic environment and landscape and population and communities (albeit with some uncertainty, given that the plan does not address total housing quantum). No significant negative effects are predicted.

PART 4: WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS (INCLUDING MONITORING)?

25 INTRODUCTION TO PART 4

- 25.1.1 This part of the report explains next steps (i.e. steps subsequent to submission, to the Local Planning Authority, of the NP, the consultation statement and this Environmental Report, in-line with **Regulation 15**).

26 PLAN FINALISATION AND ADOPTION

- 26.1.1 **Regulation 16** requires that the Local Authority ‘publicises’ the Proposed Plan so that stakeholders can make representations that may then be considered at Examination. It will be appropriate for the Local Authority to also publicise the updated Environmental Report, with a view to informing representations.
- 26.1.2 **Regulation 17** requires that the Local Authority submits (to the person appointed to carry out the Examination) the Proposed Plan and a copy of any representations which have been made in accordance with Regulation 16. It may be appropriate for the Local Authority to also submit the updated Environmental Report, with a view to informing the Examination.
- 26.1.3 **Regulations 18 and 19** require that, subsequent to the Examination, the Local Authority publishes the Examiner’s Report and a Decision Statement. The Decision Statement sets out whether or not the Local Authority is prepared to ‘make’ (i.e. adopt) the plan. If the Local Authority is prepared to make the plan, then a referendum can be held. It may be appropriate for the Local Authority to also publish an updated Environmental Report, with a view to informing the Referendum.
- 26.1.4 **Regulation 20** states what the Local Authority must do when the plan is ‘made’ (i.e. adopted). The SEA Statement must be published alongside the made Plan. The SEA Statement must present:
- information on the decision, i.e. must explain why the final plan approach was decided-upon in light of SEA and consultation; and
 - measures decided concerning monitoring.

27 MONITORING

- 27.1.1 At the current stage – i.e. in the Environmental Report - there is a need to present ‘a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring’. In light of the assessment findings presented in Part 3 of this report, it is suggested that monitoring might focus on heritage and landscape, traffic and transport and affordable housing delivery, seeking to ensure that a policy supporting only smaller schemes is not resulting in unintended consequences.