



**Abbey Centre and
Charter Area SPD
Sustainability Appraisal**

November 2011

Planning Policy

Vale of White Horse District Council

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1.0 Introduction

1.0.1 This report sets out a sustainability appraisal for the Abbey Centre and Charter Area Draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The Sustainability Appraisal of SPDs is a requirement of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act.

1.1 Abingdon in context

1.1.1 Abingdon is a market town within Oxfordshire located approximately 9km South of Oxford and 8km North of Didcot. It falls within the Vale of White Horse District Council (VWHDC) with Abingdon being one of the key settlements within the district.

The Abbey Centre and Charter Area

1.1.2 The Abbey Centre (formerly known as the Bury Street Precinct) and the Charter Area are located in the centre of Abingdon to the North of the main market square. It is formed of a 1960s retail precinct and the Charter Area that includes community facilities (a Health Centre, a Library and a Day Care Centre) along with a multi-storey car park. Bury Street is the main retail street within Abingdon although there are other retail uses on the surrounding historic streets.

1.1.3 To the North of the site lies Stratton Way which is a strategic route linking Abingdon to Didcot and Oxford, with the surrounding areas being predominantly residential.

Character

1.1.4 The buildings located within the Charter Area and the Abbey Centre are somewhat tired and dated. At present they detract from the historic quality of the rest of the Town Centre. Current and emerging local planning policy identifies the redevelopment of the area as key to raising the quality of Abingdon Town Centre and ensuring its longevity as a thriving and attractive centre.

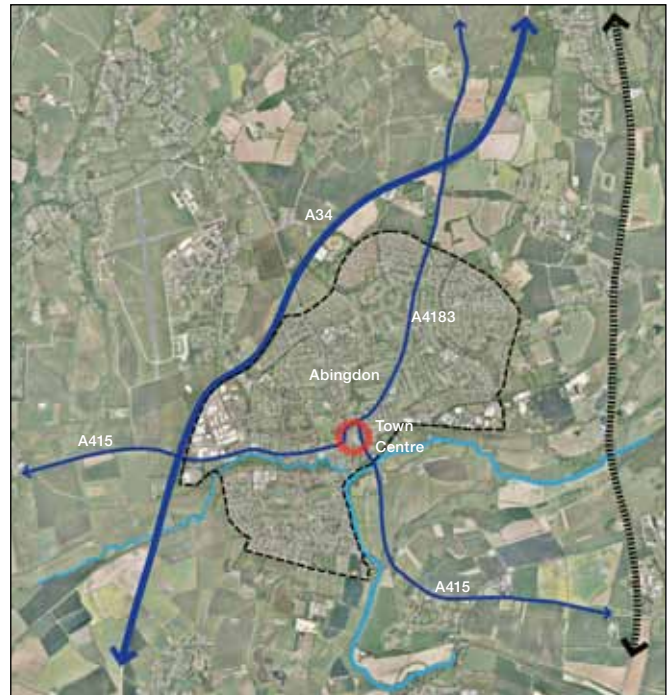


Fig 1.1 Abingdon in its context

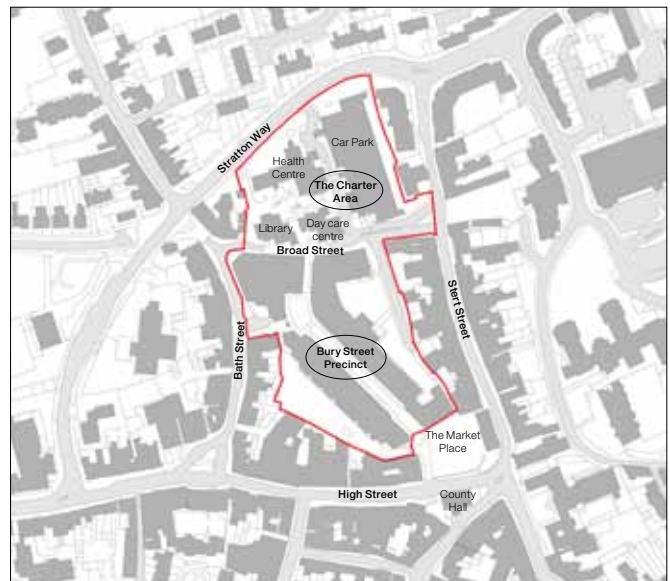


Fig 1.2 Site location plan

1.2 SPD planning policy context

1.2.1 The SPD will be a development brief that forms part of the planning policy framework for Abingdon. It elaborates on policies within higher level planning policy, and will be used to help assess any future planning applications for the area as well as providing guidance to potential developers and designers.

1.2.2 The SA has been used to inform the decisions made during the preparation of the SPD to ensure that the principles of sustainable development are embedded into the Development Brief.

1.2.3 The current planning policy context for the VWHDC is set by the saved policies of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011. This Plan will be replaced in due course by the Core Strategy which is currently being prepared.

1.2.4 The Local Plan includes a site-specific Policy, S7. This policy (set out opposite) is supported by a Shopping Study carried out in 1991 that recommended that long-term consideration should be given to the redevelopment or extensive refurbishment of the Bury Street Precinct to provide modern well-serviced retail accommodation. A sensitively designed scheme, it was suggested, would significantly enhance the whole central area of Abingdon. This policy is set out in full opposite.

1.2.5 Policy S1 notes that retail development will be permitted within Abingdon Town Centre provided that it is in keeping with the scale and character of the centre and would not create unacceptable traffic or environmental problems.

1.2.6 The Core Strategy Preferred Options report was issued for consultation in January 2009. This has been followed up with further consultation on additional issues. The Preferred Options report has been subject to Sustainability Appraisal which was issued for consultation in February 2009, with a scoping report issued in March 2007.

Policy S7 The Bury Street Precinct, Abingdon :

Within the Bury Street Precinct and Charter Areas (as defined on the Proposals Map) proposals which lead to environmental enhancement and major refurbishment will be permitted.

The Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2001 included three areas within Abingdon town centre where there were policies to guide new development or redevelopment: the Vineyard policy area (including part of the old cinema site), West Central and the Bury Street Precinct. The future of the Vineyard and West Central areas has now been largely resolved. Schemes have come forward in the Vineyard area, predominantly for housing, and at West Central the Council has resolved to grant detailed planning permission for a mixed-use scheme including residential, a foyer (a residential/training facility for young people) and offices uses. However, no comprehensive proposals have come forward on the Bury Street Precinct and therefore it is appropriate to continue with a policy in the Local Plan seeking environmental enhancement and major refurbishment for this area.

The 1991 Shopping Study recommended that long-term consideration should be given to the redevelopment or extensive refurbishment of the Bury Street precinct to provide modern well-serviced retail accommodation. A sensitively designed scheme, it was suggested, would significantly enhance the whole central area of Abingdon. This recommendation was reiterated in the 1996 Review for implementation as a shorter term priority.

The Bury Street precinct was designed over 30 years ago and, although it is well-positioned on major pedestrian routes and offers the potential for attractive traffic-free shopping, it is now dated in design. Although the Council has designed, funded and implemented a new scheme for re-paving and street furniture, the precinct remains in need of major refurbishment. Such a scheme could include the rationalisation or provision of new and larger shop units and measures to improve pedestrian circulation, weather protection, security and the overall appearance of the area. Particular attention should be paid to the provision of high quality shop fronts. The improvement of the precinct together with proposals in the Abingdon Integrated Transport Strategy (ABITS) described in Chapter 5 are vital elements in any strategy aimed at enhancing the vitality and viability of Abingdon's town centre.

1.2.7 The Core Strategy contains an objective relating specifically to Abingdon in the ‘retail and town centre uses’ section (paragraph 4.53 of the Core Strategy Preferred Options report). This objective forms an overarching vision for the future of Abingdon and its Town Centre uses. The other objectives can be seen as an elaboration of the overarching vision stated below:

“Abingdon will continue as the Vale’s largest shopping area serving the towns and villages in the east of the district. The Bury Street precinct and the Charter Area could be redeveloped to improve the range of shops and the appearance of the area. Opportunities could be taken to enlarge the library and health centre, and provide offices and homes above the ground floor.”

1.2.8 The rest of the objectives within the Core Strategy elaborate on this vision and relate to the future aspirations for Abingdon. These are that by 2026:

- its vibrant town centre has a successful range of varied and specialist shops, restaurants, public houses and hotels. It has improved cultural facilities and a buoyant local economy providing a range jobs enjoyed by local residents. A range of uses, including residential and offices, occupy the first and second floors of many central buildings;
- Abbey Centre and the Charter area have been comprehensively and attractively developed for new shops and town centre uses that have improved the retail offer and vitality of the Town Centre;
- environmental improvements elsewhere have enhanced the historic character of the town including High Street, the southern side of Market Place and Ock Street; and
- there are good facilities for cycling, walking and car parking.

1.3 SA structure

1.3.1 This report incorporates the following sections:

- Section 2 gives the background to SA and the requirements of the SEA Directive. It also outlines the methodology for the preparation of this report.
- Section 3 introduces the sustainability framework which was developed as part of the higher level Core Strategy Scoping Report. The objectives of the SPD are tested against this for compatibility
- Section 4 evaluates the development options against the framework.
- Section 5 highlights how the appraisal process has shaped the draft SPD
- Section 6 concludes the SA at this stage and sets out the next steps that will be taken in the process.



The County Hall is a focal point in the Town Centre.



Abingdon has an attractive, historic Town Centre with the main focus being the Market Place



The Bury Street Precinct has a somewhat tired and outdated feel.



Stratton Way is a busy strategic route into Abingdon



Broad Street is currently an uninviting pedestrian route, due in part to the inactive frontages



The narrow historic streets can be source of pedestrian / vehicular conflict



The public realm in the Charter Area is confusing to navigate for pedestrians



The Charter Area currently contains a multi-storey car park

2.0 Background

2.1 The purpose of sustainability appraisal

2.1.1 Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 Sustainability Appraisal is required of all new or revised planning documents. It is a methodology used for assessing the overall sustainability of plans and programmes; assessing environmental impacts but also the wider social and economic effects of implementing a particular policy or plan.

2.1.2 There is also a need to meet the requirements of the EU Directive 2001/42/EC which concerns the assessment of environmental impacts of plans and programmes. This is commonly known as the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive or the SEA Directive. The methodology for undertaking this SA incorporates the requirements of the SEA Directive. This sustainability appraisal is undertaken using published government guidance "Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents" (ODPM, 2005). This advocates a five stage process (A-E) which is illustrated along with the relevant SPD stages in Fig 2.1 and incorporates the requirements of the SEA Directive.

2.1.3 The aim of SA is to ensure that the principals of sustainable development run through all plans and programmes that are produced by Local Authorities. Thus, the aim is that sustainability issues are thought about in an integrated way from the beginning of a project rather than an add-on at the end.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 This SA addresses the first three stages of the SA Process:

- Stage A: Deciding on the scope;
- Stage B: Developing and refining options; and
- Stage C: Preparing the SA report.

Stage A

2.2.2 The Development Brief SPD expands upon policies which are contained within the Local Plan and emerging Core Strategy. The emerging Core Strategy has already been through the Sustainability Appraisal process. The scoping stage of the Core Strategy SA has been through public consultation and was adopted in March 2007.

2.2.3 Stage A is about investigating the background and context of the area. This stage concludes with the production of the scoping report. As the SPD elaborates on policies which are held within the higher level Core Strategy, the information gathered in the Core Strategy SA scoping report can be used as a basis for the SA of this SPD. The Core Strategy SA Scoping Report contains a review of other plans and programmes that could potentially have a sustainability impact at local, regional, national and international levels.

2.2.4 The main output from this stage is the sustainability framework which consists of a series of objectives that relate to the economic, social and environmental performance of the district and can be used to test objectives and options for their sustainability. Key sustainability issues and problems are identified for the Vale in order to focus the sustainability framework so it is of local relevance, these are outlined in section 3.1. This means that broader concerns have been taken into consideration when formulating the objectives for the sustainability framework.

Stage B

2.2.5 The next stage is the preparation of the draft SPD; during this phase the broad objectives of the SPD are tested against the sustainability framework produced during Stage A. In this case the main objectives for the SPD have been taken from the Core Strategy and as such were tested as part of the Core Strategy Preferred Options SA (February 2009), the results of this testing are shown in section 3.3.

2.2.6 The production of the SPD involved the development of different options to test a number of different factors including sustainability issues. The testing involves the prediction of the significant effects of implementing the SPD against the objectives in the sustainability framework with an aim to maximising the opportunities for improving the social, environmental and economic sustainability. This was an iterative process with the outcomes of option testing feeding back into the option development and subsequently the options helping to shape the development framework and design guidance contained within the SPD. The testing involves the prediction of potential impacts and identifying ways in which they can be mitigated against.

Stage C

This report forms stage C in Fig 2.1 which is the SA report, which will then be consulted on along with the draft SPD as part of stage D.

The different stages in the SA process

SPD stage 1: Pre-production and evidence gathering

Stage A: Setting context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope

A1 Identifying other relevant policies, plans and programmes, and sustainable development objectives

A2 Collecting baseline information

A3 Identifying sustainability issues and problems

A4 Developing the SA framework

A5 Consulting on the scope of the SA

SPD stage 2: Production - Prepare draft SPD

Stage B: Developing and refining options and assessing effects

B1 Testing the SPD objectives against the SA framework

B2 Developing the SPD options

B3 predicting the effects of the draft SPD

B4 Evaluating the effects of the draft SPD

B5 considering ways of mitigating adverse effects and maximising beneficial effects

B6 Proposing measures to monitor the significant effects of implementing the SPD.

Stage C: Preparing the SA report

C1 Preparing the SA report

SPD stage 3: Public participation on draft SPD

Stage D: Consulting on the draft SPD and Sustainability Appraisal report

D1 Public participation on the SA report and the draft SPD

D2 Assessing significant changes

SPD stage 4: representations and finalise SPD

SPD stage 5: Adoption of the SPD

ADOPTION OF SPD

D3 Making decisions and providing information

Stage E: Monitoring the significant effects of implementing the SPD

E1 Finalising aims and methods for monitoring

E2 Responding to adverse effects

Fig 2.1 Diagram indicating the different stages in an SA alongside key stages in SPD production

3.0 SA Framework and SPD Objectives

3.1 Using the Core Strategy sustainability framework

3.1.1 The first stage (A) of an SA is to gather information and establish key sustainability issues for Abingdon, whilst also reflecting broader concerns at the regional, national and international level. The key issues for the Vale were set out in the Core Strategy SA Scoping Report (March 2007). These were:

- Lack of affordable housing
- Provision of employment opportunities
- Congestion on strategic and local road network
- Lack of alternatives to the private car
- Rural isolation/accessibility
- Need to conserve water
- Reduction and prevention of flooding
- Need to reduce use of fossil fuels and encourage the development of renewables
- Protection of valued landscapes
- Quality of built environments
- Protection of cultural heritage
- Protection and improvement of biodiversity
- Need to restrain/reduce effects of noise air, water and light pollution
- Pressure for development, particularly housing
- Protection and provision of recreational facilities
- The health of Vale residents
- Deprivation in some parts of the Vale
- Effects of an ageing population
- Impacts from tourism
- Low levels of educational achievement
- Action to address the causes and effects of climate change
- The generation of waste

3.1.2 The key issues and problems along with the review of other plans and programmes were used to develop the objectives for the SA framework. The SA framework published as part of the Core Strategy Scoping Report is outlined on the opposite page (Fig 3.1). This SA framework has been used to appraise the SPD objectives and the development options in the following sections of this SA report

Sustainability Appraisal Framework

Sustainability Objective	Related Issues / Problems
1. Access to decent, sustainably constructed and affordable homes	Lack of affordable housing; Quality of built environment; Pressure for development, particularly housing.
2. Improved accessibility to high quality services and involvement in decision making for the public	Rural isolation/accessibility; Deprivation in parts of the Vale.
3. Improved community safety	Congestion on strategic road network; Deprivation in parts of the Vale.
4. Increased quality of life for Vale residents.	Protection and provision of recreational facilities; Effects of an aging population; The health of Vale residents; Deprivation in parts of the Vale; Provision of employment opportunities.
5. Raised educational achievement and skills levels	Provision of employment opportunities; Low levels of educational achievement.
6. Establish a strong and sustainable economy within the Vale	Provision of employment opportunities; Low levels of educational achievement.
7. Establish a dynamic, diverse and knowledge-based economy with high value low impact activities	Provision of employment opportunities; Low levels of educational achievement.
8. Develop a strong and sustainable tourism sector	Impacts from tourism; Congestion on strategic and local road network
9. Reduced road congestion and associated pollution	Congestion on strategic and local road network; Lack of alternatives to the private car.
10. Reduced poverty and social exclusion with disadvantaged groups achieving potential	Lack of alternatives to the private car; Provision of employment opportunities; Deprivation in parts of the Vale; Low levels of educational achievement.
11. Creating vibrant communities	Protection and provision of recreational facilities; Protection of cultural heritage.
12. Greater engagement in cultural activity	Protection of cultural heritage
13. Improved health and wellbeing	The health of Vale residents; Deprivation in parts of the Vale; Effects of an aging population.
14. Improve and protect the natural environment (including biodiversity)	Protection and improvement of biodiversity; Impacts from tourism; Action to address the causes and effects of climate change.
15. Improve and protect the built environment	Quality of built environment; Protection of valued landscapes and built environments; Protection of cultural heritage
16. Sustainable use of land, buildings and resources	Protection and improvement of biodiversity; Impacts from tourism; Need to conserve water; Need to reduce use of fossil fuels and encourage renewables; Action to address the causes and effects of climate change.
17. Effective action on climate change	Protection and improvement of biodiversity; Impacts from tourism; Need to conserve water; Need to reduce use of fossil fuels and encourage renewables; Action to address the causes and effects of climate change.
18. Increased generation of energy by renewables	Need to reduce use of fossil fuels and encourage renewables
19. Reduced risk of flooding	Reduction and prevention of flooding
20. Maintained and improved river quality and water resources	Need to conserve water; Need to restrain/reduce effects of noise air, water and light pollution.
21. Reduced air, noise and light pollution	Need to restrain/reduce effects of noise air, water and light pollution; Congestion on strategic and local road network; Lack of alternatives to the private car.

Fig 3.1 The Core Strategy SA framework (taken from the Core Strategy Scoping Report, March 2007)

3.2 The SPD objectives and vision

3.2.1 The next stage in the SA process is to ensure that the broad aims and vision of the SPD objectives fall in line with the sustainability framework and there is no conflict over any of the objectives. A conflict would mean a negative sustainability outcome which should be mitigated against where possible. This process is important as it highlights areas where an impact is uncertain and helps to formulate the content of the SPD document.

3.2.2 The Core Strategy Preferred Options report provides a set of objectives for the Vale as a whole. These provide a vision for what the Vale will be like in 2026. Specific objectives relating to Abingdon and its town centre are included as part of this. These objectives form the basis for the vision and aims of the SPD.

3.2.3 As set out in Section 1.0, the SPD document elaborates on policies set out within the emerging Core Strategy. We have taken the four aims from Section 3.4 as the overall objectives for this SPD. These are:

1. Its vibrant town centre has a successful range of varied and specialist shops, restaurants, public houses and hotels. It has improved cultural facilities and a buoyant local economy providing a range of jobs enjoyed by local residents. A range of uses, including residential and offices, occupy the first and second floors of many central buildings.
2. The Abbey Centre and the Charter area have been comprehensively and attractively developed for new shops and town centre uses that have improved the retail offer and vitality of the town centre.
3. Environmental improvements elsewhere have enhanced the historic character of the town including High Street, the southern side of Market Place and Ock Street.
4. There are good facilities for cycling, walking and car parking.

3.3 The compatibility of the SPD objectives with the SA framework

3.3.1 As the objectives for the SPD have been taken from the Core Strategy they have already been tested against the SA framework as part of the sustainability appraisal of the Core Strategy. The outcome of this is repeated in the table opposite.

3.3.2 The scoring of the SPD objectives against the sustainability framework in the table is on the following basis

+	a positive effect
-	a negative effect
0	no effect
?	an indeterminate effect

3.3.3 The testing indicates that the overall objectives of the SPD fall in line with the sustainability framework and that there are no potential conflicts at this stage. Where there is an indeterminate effect on the sustainability implications of some of the objectives of the SPD, this is generally due to a lack of detailed information available at this stage in the process. Analysis of the uncertainties has been used to help shape some of the design guidance that is contained within the SPD document to ensure that when more detailed plans are submitted they fall in line with the sustainability framework.

SPD Objective	1	2	3	4
SA Objective	A vibrant town centre	Improved retail offer	Enhanced historic character	Good cycling, walking and car parking
1	+	0	0	0
2	+	+	+	+
3	?	?	?	?
4	+	+	+	+
5	?	0	0	0
6	+	+	+	+
7	+	+	+	+
8	+	+	+	+
9	?	?	?	+
10	+	?	?	+
11	+	+	+	?
12	+	+	+	?
13	+	+	+	+
14	0	0	0	+
15	?	?	+	?
16	?	?	?	+
17	?	?	?	+
18	0	0	0	0
19	0	0	0	0
20	0	0	0	0
21	?	?	?	+
Comments from Core Strategy SA (February 2009)	This objective scores positively against a large number of the indicators but there are a large number of indeterminates which depend on the details of any proposals	This objective also scores positively against a large number of indicators but there are a large number of interdeterminates which depend on the details of any proposals.	Once again there are a large number of positive scores but indeterminates exist due to lack of detail.	Over half of the indicators are positive with no negatives which indicates that this is a highly sustainable objective

Fig 3.2 Compatibility of the SPD objectives against the SA framework

Uncertain outcomes

3.3.4 The indeterminate elements of the appraisal of the objectives have been outlined below and in Fig 3.3 opposite. These have been sorted into elements that have a high, medium or low uncertainty as to their outcome. Aspects that have a high uncertainty are objectives from the SA framework that have an uncertain outcome for all of the SPD objectives (essentially meaning that it is hard to say what the sustainability impact will be for most of the objectives of the SPD). These are the areas where special attention needs to be paid in the preparation of the SPD document. Medium uncertainties are where 2-3 of the objectives in the matrix have an uncertain outcome. Low uncertainties are objectives where only one of the SPD objectives is uncertain when compared against it.

3.3.5 At present the objectives from the SA framework that will need to have special care taken over them during the preparation of the SPD document are:

High uncertainties (4 of the objectives have uncertain outcomes):

- Improved community safety (3)

Medium uncertainties (2 - 3 of the objectives have uncertain outcomes):

- Reduced road congestion and associated pollution (9)
- Reduced poverty and social exclusion with disadvantaged groups achieving their potential (10)
- Improve and protect the built environment (15)
- Sustainable use of land, buildings and resources (16)
- Effective action on climate change (17)
- Reduced air, noise and light pollution (21)

Low uncertainty (1 objective has an uncertain outcome):

- Raised educational achievement and skills levels (5)
- Creating vibrant communities (11)
- Greater engagement in cultural activity (12)

3.3.6 The objectives that have an uncertain outcome need to be mitigated against becoming a negative outcome. Taking into account the scope of this SPD we felt that there are 2 ways mitigation could occur;

- guidance can be included within the body of the SPD document to address the uncertainty;
- future actions can be identified that will need to take place in order for there to be a positive outcome.

3.3.7 The table in Fig 3.3 lists the potential uncertain and identifies how the SPD document can address the issue or outlines what would need to occur in the future for the uncertainty to not become a negative.

High Uncertainties	Why is there an uncertain outcome?	How the SPD can address the uncertainty
Improved community safety	<p>Potential for increase in traffic and congestion on road network</p> <p>Safety (in terms of crime) of new area dependant on detailed design</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ include design guidance on safe streets and spaces; ■ include principles of safe pedestrian movement / minimising conflict with cars, servicing vehicles and so on; and ■ require a Travel Plan to address potential increase in traffic by encouraging travel by modes other than the private car.
Medium Uncertainties		
Improve and protect the built environment	<p>The ability for the redevelopment to improve and protect the environment is reliant on the detailed design stage.</p> <p>Setting of historic, listed buildings and conservation areas is reliant on good quality design</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ include design guidance to ensure that new buildings, streets and spaces contribute positively to the existing townscape; and ■ ensure that the design guidance is informed by an appraisal of the historic environment of the Conservation Area and the listed buildings.
Reduced air, noise and light pollution	<p>Increase in traffic is an unknown at the moment - meaning that its potential to impact on air pollution is also unknown</p> <p>Likelihood of noise or light pollution is also an unknown at present.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ identify opportunities for improving pedestrian and cycle access and circulation; ■ require potential developers to liaise with Oxfordshire County Council to address traffic issues (and hence air quality); and ■ require the submission of a Travel Plan with any planning applications.
Reduced road congestion and associated pollution	As mentioned difficult to predict the exact impact.	As for reduced air, noise and light pollution above
Reduced poverty and social exclusion with disadvantaged groups achieving their potential	As the scope of the brief is somewhat removed from this objective it is difficult to predict how it will affect the objective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ include requirement for the re-provision of community facilities (i.e. the library and the health centre); and ■ ensure pedestrian routes connect conveniently to bus stops, so ensuring that those without access to a car reach the new facilities easily.

Fig 3.3 Uncertain outcomes and how they will be addressed. Continued overleaf.

Sustainable use of land, buildings and resources	As land is already developed this can be seen as a sustainable use of the land. The uncertainties are due to lack of detailed design of the buildings at this stage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ include requirement for buildings to be energy efficient; ■ include clear targets (e.g. BREEAM); and ■ require a Travel Plan that encourages access by modes other than the private car.
Effective action on climate change	This objective is hard to predict without a detailed proposal.	As for sustainable use of land, buildings and resources above.
Low uncertainty		
Raised educational achievement and skills levels	The redevelopment of the area will provide employment opportunities, whether this will result in raised educational achievement and skill levels is difficult to predict.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ require the provision of a new library.
Creating vibrant communities	The scope of the SPD to contribute to this is through the creation of high quality public spaces, this relies on the quality of the design.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ include guidance encouraging a mix of different uses; and ■ include guidance encouraging a high quality public realm which can accommodate a range of activities.
Greater engagement in cultural activity	This is reliant on the detailed design of the re-development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ encourage high quality development that is well-connected to the wider Town Centre, so that other parts of Abingdon can benefit from any increase in shoppers and visitors to the area.

Fig 3.3 Uncertain outcomes and how they will be addressed. (Continued from previous page)

Positive Outcomes

3.3.8 From the appraisal of the SPD objectives it is identified that the SPD objectives have the potential to positively influence the sustainability of the Town Centre in a variety of different ways. The areas where the SPD objectives have been identified to have the largest positive impact is:

- access to services;
- quality of life;
- strong and sustainable economy;
- dynamic diverse and knowledge based economy;
- tourism; and
- improved health and well-being.

3.3.9 During the preparation of the SPD document care has been taken to ensure that the potential positive impacts have been maximised when preparing the Development Brief.

4.0 Developing the SPD

4.0.1 This section of the report assesses the two options which form part of the appendices of the SPD document and informed the decisions that were made in the preparation process. The assessment of the options against the SA Framework was an iterative process and the appraisal helped to inform their development and the final production of the SPD.

4.1 Developing and testing options

4.1.1 In order to achieve the objectives of the SPD two options were developed and tested against the SA framework. The options have been tested not only against the SA framework but also in terms of planning and urban design issues such as impact on the Conservation Area; retail - in terms of what would bring maximum benefit to the retail offer in Abingdon; and car parking issues. The main variable in the options is the size of the food store.

4.1.2 We have used a more detailed scale when appraising the options against the SA framework than was used when testing the SPD objectives. This helps to more clearly differentiate between the two options as the broader scale used in the previous section fails to pick up the smaller differences at this more detailed stage. This scale is as follows:

++ Very positive: The option contributes significantly to the achievement of the objective.

+ Positive: The option contributes to the achievement of the objective but not in a significant way.

0 No effect: There is no clear link between the option and the objective or the relationship is negligible.

- Negative: The option detracts from the achievement of the objective but not significantly.

-- Very negative: The proposal in the option detracts significantly from the achievement of the objective.

? An indeterminate effect: The option either has both a positive and negative effect on the objective or the relationship is dependant on the way it is managed. As such more information is needed to enable an assessment to be made.

4.1.3 The options do not differ dramatically from each other in terms of their sustainability according to the assessment. However, there are some areas where one option has a more positive effect on an objective than the other. Broadly speaking they align with each other so if one option is positive the other one generally is too, but to a greater or lesser degree.

4.1.4 Option 1 performs slightly better than Option 2 when assessed against the sustainability framework. The differences are very small, and these only occur for three out of the 21 objectives. The specific objectives where Option 1 performs better than Option 2 are:

- Objective 2: Access to services
- Objective 7: Dynamic, diverse and knowledge based economy
- Objective 8: Tourism

4.1.5 Generally the differences are attributed to the size of the food store. In Option 2 the larger food store reduces the ability to have a wider variety of different types of other retail units. This subsequently has an impact on the diversity of the economy, as there is less choice of different types of retail unit. This also impacts on tourism as there is less variety of retail on offer in the Town Centre in Option 2.

4.1.6 Access to services are slightly better in Option 1 as they are provided at the ground floor meaning that the facilities will be more easily accessible, whereas in Option 2 they are provided on the first floor. The comments in Fig 4.1 further explain the predicted impacts.

4.2 Conclusion leading to development of the draft SPD

4.2.1 There is little difference between the two options in terms of sustainability. The development principles explored in both options have been drawn from emerging Core Strategy policy. These objectives have, in turn, been tested against the SA framework and found to be consistent with the overall sustainability aims of the framework. The SPD should therefore include guidance and principles that require development similar to the two options.

	Objective	Option 01	Option 02	Comments
1	Affordable housing	0	0	Neither of the options provide residential accommodation as such they do not make a contribution to this objective. There is not a negative effect as it is unlikely that housing will be lost as a result of the SPD.
2	Access to services	++	+	<p>There are existing community uses on the site that will be re-provided as a part of both the options. This will result in an improvement in the condition and accessibility of the current facilities thus having a positive effect.</p> <p>In Option 1 the community facilities are provided on the ground floor whereas in Option 2 they are provided at first floor level thus making the accessibility to the services easier in Option 1.</p>
3	Community Safety	+	+	<p>The proposed mix of uses in the redevelopment of the Charter Area will increase natural surveillance in the area. The use of high quality urban design incorporating 'secure by design' principles will mean that potential crime 'hotspots' can be designed out.</p> <p>Potential reorganisation of Broad Street could lead to an improved pedestrian environment.</p>
4	Quality of life	+	+	The provision of a high quality environment which will also provide new employment opportunities and community uses will have a positive effect on the quality of life for residents in Abingdon.
5	Education and skills	?	?	The Core Strategy identifies employment opportunities as a key issue for this objective. The new development will provide employment opportunities within Abingdon Town Centre however it will also result in the loss of office space. A new library could improve access to education and information for local people. It is difficult at this stage to predict what the effects of this would be on education and skills and whether the effect would be positive or negative.
6	Strong and sustainable economy	++	++	<p>The provision of new high quality retail facilities will attract retailers and ensure the ongoing vitality of the Town Centre as a whole.</p> <p>The new retail development will provide employment opportunities although at this stage it is difficult to predict to what extent it will affect the diversity of the economy.</p>

Fig 4.1 Comparison of the options against the SA framework. Continued overleaf.

7	Dynamic, Diverse and knowledge based economy	++	+	<p>One of the aims of the project is to provide a more diverse retail offer than currently exists for Abingdon</p> <p>Option 2 has less potential to diversify the retail offer and it is less flexible in terms of future change due to the provision of one larger food store. Option 1 also offers some smaller units helping to diversify the retail offer.</p>
8	Tourism	++	+	<p>An increase in the quantity and quality of retail within the Town Centre combined with a high quality development following good urban design principles within an already attractive historic market town will increase the tourism opportunities within Abingdon.</p> <p>Option 2 has less potential for diversity of the retail offer in the Town Centre.</p>
9	Road congestion and associated pollution	?	?	<p>The development will have an impact on road and traffic issues, however it is difficult at this stage to understand the exact nature of these impacts. The aim of the SPD is also to improve pedestrian and cycle connections within the town which could help to counterbalance negative impacts.</p>
10	Poverty and social exclusion	?	?	<p>The new development will provide employment opportunities, however it is difficult to predict at this stage what effect this will have on poverty and social exclusion.</p> <p>The new development will also provide new community facilities in the form of library and health centre, which should have a positive impact on poverty and social exclusion.</p>
11	Vibrant communities	+	+	<p>The new development will improve the environment of the Town Centre which will have a positive influence on recreational activities and the environment of the Town Centre.</p>
12	Engagement in cultural activity	+	+	<p>The new development will improve the setting of the historic area of Abingdon thus encouraging engagement in activities within the Town Centre.</p>
13	Improved health and well being	+	+	<p>The impact of the development is likely to be negligible as the only element that might affect the objective is provision of new health care facilities. As these will be replacing existing facilities the effect would be neutral.</p> <p>There is potential for the new facilities to be an improvement on the existing offer meaning a positive outcome.</p>
14	Improve and protect the natural environment	0	0	<p>As the development is on previously developed land the impact on the natural environment is likely to be neutral</p>
15	Improve and protect the built environment	+	+	<p>The new development has the potential to enhance the built environment of an area which is currently run down and tired.</p> <p>There is the potential to improve the setting of the Conservation Area and listed buildings.</p>
16	Sustainable use of land, buildings and resources	++	++	<p>The development area is previously developed land and as such is a sustainable use of the land. The guidance will refer to best practice guidance on conservation of resources and sustainable design for buildings.</p>

Fig 4.1 Comparison of the options against the SA framework. Continued from previous page.

17	Action on climate change	?	?	The development potentially could have an effect on climate change in a number of ways: there could be increased amounts of traffic, carbon emissions associated with the running of the buildings and the use of resources. However, existing inefficient buildings would be replaced by energy efficient new buildings. However, it is difficult to assess at this stage the exact impact it could have.
18	Increased generation of energy by renewables	?	?	It is difficult to predict at this stage what proportion of energy will be generated from renewables as this depends on the individual design of the buildings and the regulatory requirements at the time.
19	Reduced risk of flooding	?	?	Part of the site is within a flood zone. As any increase in development can result in an increase in impermeable surfaces, it can contribute to an increased risk of flooding. However, as the site is already developed the amount of impermeable surfaces is likely to remain the same. There is the potential that carefully designed development and the use of SUDS could lower the risk of flooding. No vulnerable uses (such as residential) are proposed at ground floor level in either of the options.
20	Improve water quality and water resources	0	0	The new development is unlikely to affect water quality in the River Thames.
21	Reduce air, noise and light pollution	?	?	Any new development has the potential to negatively impact on air, noise and light pollution. It is difficult to predict at this stage what that impact will be. There could be a potential negative impact on air quality from the potential increase in traffic, however it is unknown at this stage if this will be mitigated. Air quality in the Town Centre has been identified as a key issue and Abingdon is defined as an Air Quality Management Area.

Fig 4.1 Comparison of the options against the SA framework. Continued from previous page.

5.0 Draft SPD

5.0.1 In this chapter we set out how the previous stages have led to the guidance in the final draft SPD and how the process has helped to shape its contents to achieve the most sustainable outcome for the redevelopment of the Charter Area and the Abbey Centre.

that will include a future SPD on sustainable construction. It also stipulates that buildings must be designed to be energy efficient and should achieve a minimum of a BREEAM 'very good' rating.

5.1.3 The table opposite highlights which objectives the principles and design guidance address.

5.1 Outcome of the appraisal process

5.1.1 The initial appraisal of the objectives of the SPD showed no potential conflicts in terms of comparison against the sustainability framework. A number of areas were identified where the potential for a positive outcome was high. There were also a number of objectives where the outcome was less certain or more difficult to predict at that stage in the process.

5.1.2 The SPD has been designed to address uncertainties where possible by providing clear guidance on what is required in the redevelopment of the area. This guidance is provided in Section 3 of the SPD document and is structured as follows:

- 3.2 - The development concept
- 3.3 - The development framework, including specific principles on the following:
 - i. The broad location of land uses
 - ii. Active and positive edges
 - iii. Pedestrian routes and linkages
 - iv. Vehicular Access and servicing
 - v. Response to key views
- Specific design guidance has also been written to guide detailed proposals and ensure the most positive outcome. The guidance relates to the;
 - 3.4 - Large floorplate building type
 - 3.5 - Smaller retail units
 - 3.6 - The public realm
- 3.7 - Sustainability requirements - A section is also included that highlights the sustainability requirements regarding the construction and performance of new buildings. This gives reference to emerging LDF policy

	Objective	Draft SPD	Contents of SPD addressing the objective
1	Affordable housing	0	N/A
2	Access to services	+	3.3 (i)
3	Community Safety	+	3.3 (i), 3.3 (ii), 3.3 (iii) , 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6
4	Quality of life	+	3.3 (ii)
5	Education and skills	?	3.3 (i)
6	Strong and sustainable economy	++	3.3 (i), 3.3 (iii), 3.3 (iv)
7	Dynamic, Diverse and knowledge based economy	+	3.3 (i)
8	Tourism	+	3.3 (iii), 3.3 (v)
9	Road congestion and associated pollution	?	3.7
10	Poverty and social exclusion	?	3.3 (i)
11	Vibrant communities	+	3.3 (ii), 3.3 (iii), 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6
12	Engagement in cultural activity	+	3.3 (iii), 3.3 (v)
13	Improved health and well being	?	3.3 (i), 3.3 (iii)
14	Improve and protect the natural environment	0	N/A
15	Improve and protect the built environment	+	Most of the contents of the SPD addresses this objective
16	Sustainable use of land, buildings and resources	++	3.7
17	Action on climate change	?	3.7
18	Increased generation of energy by renewables	?	3.7
19	Reduced risk of flooding	?	Not specifically addressed
20	Improve water quality and water resources	0	N/A
21	Reduce air, noise and light pollution	?	3.3 Development framework

Fig 5.1 Contents of the SPD which addresses the objectives from the SA Framework

6.0 Summary and Next Steps

6.1 Summary

6.1.1 This report sets out the Sustainability Appraisal for the Abingdon Town Centre Development Brief Draft SPD. It is a requirement of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act.

6.1.2 This SA is intended to meet both the requirements for sustainability appraisal and those of the SEA Directive on environmental assessment. The appraisal has been prepared using the good practice guidance published by the ODPM.

6.1.3 Information was gathered during the first phase of the SA which helped to establish a baseline of the current situation in Abingdon and the creation of a sustainability framework. This information was gathered as part of the appraisal of the Core Strategy and the Scoping Report of the Core Strategy forms the basis for this report. The framework was then used to assess the following aspects of the SPD:

- The overall vision and objectives
- The options for the development site
- The Draft Development Brief SPD

6.1.4 No potential conflicts between the sustainability framework and the above were found, however there were some areas where the outcome was uncertain. Where this occurred care was taken during the formulation of the development brief to ensure that where possible, uncertain outcomes could be turned into positive outcomes.

6.1.5 The formation of the options fed into the development of the SPD however in the final draft they are included as appendices which work with the guidance set out in the main document.

6.1.6 Overall the SA has found that the SPD should help to contribute to the sustainable development of Abingdon with it having more potential to influence certain parts of the framework.

6.2 Next steps

6.2.1 The draft SPD and draft SA report will undergo public consultation. Following on from the consultation, the SPD and SA will be revised and updated prior to being formally adopted by VWHDC.

