

## **Site Allocations and Area Specific Policies Development Plan Document**

### **Sustainability Appraisal incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment Post- Adoption Statement**

#### **Regulation 16 of the Environmental Assessment of Plan and Programmes Regulations 2004**

**February 2017**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Regulation 16 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. It sets out how environmental and sustainability considerations have been integrated into the Site Allocations and Area Specific Policies Development Plan Document (DPD); how the Sustainability Appraisal reports have been taken into account; how the results of consultation have been taken into account; the reasons for choosing the adopted policies over alternative options, and the arrangements for monitoring the effects of the adopted Plan.
- 1.2 Suffolk Coastal District Council adopted the Site Allocations and Area Specific Policies DPD on 26th January 2017. Further details of the adoption process and supporting documents can be found on the Council's website at: <http://www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/planning/local-plans/suffolk-coastal-local-plan/site-allocations-and-area-specific-policies/>

#### **2. How environmental and sustainability considerations have been integrated into the Site Allocations and Area Specific Policies Development Plan Document**

- 2.1 The Sustainability Appraisal has been conducted in such a way that it meets the requirements of the EU Strategic Environment Assessment Directives and UK Government guidance on the preparation of Sustainability Appraisals.
- 2.2 Sustainability Appraisal has been carried out as an iterative process throughout the development of the Site Allocations and Area Specific Policies DPD, informing decision making and every stage.
- 2.3 Stage one of the process was the production of the Scoping Report. In November 2014 the Council published the joint Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report for the Site Allocations and Area Specific DPD and the Felixstowe Peninsula Area Action Plan. The Scoping Report was subject to public consultation between 7 November and 12 December 2014.
- 2.4 The Scoping Report lists relevant legislation and policies and their key objectives and details the way in which the DPDs will take these objectives into account. As part of the Scoping Report a range of social, economic and environmental data was obtained. This baseline information provided the evidence from which sustainability issues were identified and formed the basis for developing the sustainability objectives used to appraise the policy and site options within the Plan.

- 2.5 The Scoping Report was amended in response to representations received and re-published in January 2015. A summary of the consultation responses was included within the revised Scoping Report.
- 2.6 Using the objectives and framework developed through the Scoping Report, draft SA site assessments were prepared for each of the sites identified as being deliverable and developable within the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) these were published as part of the Issues and Options consultation which took place between 15 December 2014 and 27 February 2015.
- 2.7 The next stage in the process was the development of the Preferred Options. The appraisals carried out for the Issues and Options consultation were refined in light of consultation responses and used to inform the site and policy selection process which resulted in the Preferred Options report, published for consultation from 19 October until 30 November 2015. This report was accompanied by an Interim Sustainability Appraisal Report which set out the results of the assessment process undertaken in order to establish the preferred approach. The conclusions of the Interim SA Report were integrated into the Preferred Options DPD in the form of SA summaries accompanying each preferred option policy. The Interim SA Report also included an assessment of the plan objectives against the SA objectives (as established through the Scoping Report) to ensure compatibility.
- 2.8 The third stage was the Proposed Submission. Building on the Interim SA report, the Proposed Submission Sustainability Appraisal report further refined the site and policy assessments re-appraising all Proposed Submission policies. The Proposed Submission Sustainability Appraisal report was published as part of the Pre-Submission Publication consultation. Consultation on this took place between 18 April and 31 May 2016.
- 2.9 Finally, an addendum to the Sustainability Appraisal Report was prepared to accompany the Main Modifications to the Plan and published for representations for a six week period between 17 October and 28 November 2016. This addendum considered the need to revise the appraisals in light of the proposed Main Modifications.

### **3. How the environmental reports (sustainability appraisals) have been taken into account**

- 3.1 As set out above, throughout the process all suitable sites and reasonable policy options have been subject to Sustainability Appraisal, assessing the likely environmental, social and economic effects of the approach. The outcomes of these appraisals have been used as a key element of the decision making process when refining options. The likely significant effects of the Plan have also been documented and suggested mitigation highlighted where necessary.
- 3.2 The Sustainability Appraisal reports have been updated with each iteration of the Plan to reflect any changes in the conclusions of the appraisals as the result of amendments to the proposed sites or policies.
- 3.3 The Proposed Submission SA Report included policy assessment summaries within the report clearly setting out the findings of the individual appraisals and demonstrating the relative sustainability of the proposed allocations and policies in comparison to the alternative options.

- 3.4 As illustrated throughout the Proposed Submission SA Report, the site allocations and policies taken forward to the Proposed Submission version of the Plan were generally considered to be the most sustainable options.
- 3.5 In addition to appraising the individual policies and sites, the cumulative effect of the Plan was assessed and considered to create a positive effect on most sustainability objectives. Where potential significant negative effects were identified mitigation measures to overcome or reduce the impact of those effects were suggested.

#### **4. How the results of consultation have been taken into account**

- 4.1 The SEA Directive requires the opinions expressed by consultees to be taken into account during the preparation of the plan before its adoption. Throughout the Plan making process the Council has sought views on each iteration of the Sustainability Appraisal. A summary of this process, including key dates, is set out in section 2 above.
- 4.2 At each stage, the statutory consultees were sent copies of the relevant SA reports, the reports were made available to other organisations and individuals upon request, made available on the Council's websites and at all libraries across the district.
- 4.3 Responses to the consultation on the Scoping Report were incorporated into a revised Scoping Report which was republished in January 2015. The comments received, along with a Council response were included in an appendix to the revised report.
- 4.4 Following consultation on the Interim report, the Sustainability Appraisal was amended to incorporate comments where necessary. A schedule of all the comments received, the Council's assessment and the action taken was included in the Proposed Submission SA Report published alongside the submission version of the Plan.
- 4.5 In accordance with the Regulations, representations received at this stage were forwarded to the Inspector to be considered as part of the Examination into the soundness of the Plan. Subsequently, an addendum to the SA report was published as part of the Main Modifications consultation.

#### **5. The reasons for choosing the plan as adopted, in light of reasonable alternatives considered**

- 5.1 The process of Sustainability Appraisal has provided an iterative and rational method for testing and refining options through the Plan making process. Throughout the process the Sustainability Appraisal reports demonstrate that all reasonable options and alternatives have been considered in the preparation of the Plan. The reports clearly set out the process of appraisal, and option selection or rejection.
- 5.2 All preferred options and reasonable alternative options were assessed against the 23 SA objectives. The full results of these assessments were included in appendices to the Interim Sustainability Appraisal Report and the Proposed Submission Sustainability Appraisal report. In addition, the Proposed Submission Sustainability Appraisal Report included policy assessment summaries within the report clearly setting out the findings of the individual appraisals and demonstrating the relative sustainability of the proposed allocations and policies in comparison to the alternative options.

- 5.3 At the higher level, the neutral or 'do-nothing' reactive approach has been tested against the 'allocate or plan' proactive approach. The results of this assessment indicated that there are a number of positive impacts in relation to the 23 SA objectives in taking forward the Site Allocations and Area Specific Policies document. The Site Allocations document provides an additional level benefit, identifying opportunities in the district to deliver appropriate levels of residential and commercial development in the most sustainable locations whilst protecting high quality built and natural environment.

## **6. Measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan**

- 6.1 A monitoring framework was developed as part of the 2015 Scoping Report. These indicators were based on those originally established as part of the Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal. A number of the indicators have since been superseded and/or are no longer monitored. An updated list of Indicators was published as part of the Sustainability Appraisal report. The Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) will report progress against these indicators on an annual basis. Any further amendments to the indicators will also be considered as part of the AMR.