

# **Wyre Forest District Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document**

## **Sustainability Appraisal (SA) / Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Adoption Statement**

### **Introduction:**

Wyre Forest District Council adopted The Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) on the 9<sup>th</sup> December 2010. This statement has been prepared in accordance with The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (16) (3) and (4) which requires a statement to be produced on adoption of a plan or programme to detail:

1. How environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme;
2. How the Environmental Report has been taken into account;
3. How opinions expressed through public consultation have been taken into account;
4. The reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with;
5. The measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan or programme.

The Sustainability Appraisal required by S19(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 must consider social and economic, as well as environmental sustainability. The Sustainability Appraisal requirements have been incorporated into the Strategic Environmental Assessment.

### **Background to Sustainability Appraisal (SA) / Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA)**

Sustainability Appraisal are required by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) and Strategic Environmental Assessment is required by European Directive EC/2001/42 (SEA) Directive, which was transposed into European Law by the Environmental Assessment Regulations for Plans and Programmes (July 2004). Guidance issued by central government in 2004 merged the two processes, making it possible to address both requirements in a single Sustainability Appraisal Report.

The SEA Directive requires Councils to carry out a formal assessment of the significant effect of a plan or programme on the environment. The SA process broadens this requirement to include social and economic considerations as well as environmental impact. The SA process seeks to ensure that plans are prepared in accordance with the Government's guiding principles of sustainable development. These are:

- Living within environmental limits;
- Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society;
- Promoting good governance; and
- Using sound science responsibly.

### **How does this relate to the Core Strategy DPD?**

SA/SEA has been undertaken for the Core Strategy at each stage of its development. The SA/SEA work has been undertaken within the planning policy team in order that officers could fully understand the process and the implications arising from options

testing. In order to ensure that the work was sufficiently robust, an independent check was carried out by consultants UE Associates which looked at all of the work undertaken up until the preparation on the Final Sustainability Appraisal Report and made recommendations to be considered in the development of this report.

SA reports have been prepared at each stage in the development of the Core Strategy and this has allowed the SA findings to be considered alongside other factors in determining the policy selection at each stage of the development of the Core Strategy. This also provides an audit trail of the SA/SEA process.

The purpose of the Core Strategy DPD is to establish appropriate levels of housing, employment, retail and office development within the District and to set out strategic development locations for each of these. The Core Strategy also sets out strategic policy on a number of areas which all new developments within the District will need to consider.

The Core Strategy was adopted on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2010.

#### **Purpose of the SA/SEA Adoption Statement**

The Council are required to prepare a statement upon adoption of a DPD summarising:

- How the full findings of the SA process have been taken into account within the DPD, and
- How sustainability considerations more generally have been integrated into the DPD

Full details of the SA/SEA process are set out within the Core Strategy Final Sustainability Appraisal Report (January 2010).

#### **What difference has the process made?**

The Sustainability Appraisal was a multi-stage process and has informed the DPD at each stage of its preparation.

#### **Scoping**

Prior to the production of the Core Strategy DPD, an SA Scoping Report was developed and published. This report set out the draft SA Framework against which each of the policy options considered would be tested, baseline data relating to a large number of topics and the sustainability issues identified from this data, and information relating to relevant plans, policies and programmes and the implications for the SA process and the DPD. Consultation was undertaken on this report to allow key stakeholders to comment on the SA Framework, which set out 21 objectives relating to social, economic and environmental issues, as well as other aspects of the report. All representations were fully considered and a Final Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report was published in July 2007 alongside the Core Strategy Issues and Options Paper.

#### **Refining Options and Establishing Effects**

A number of issues and options were considered through both an Issues and Options Paper in July 2007 and a Revised Issues and Options Paper in January 2008. The objectives and options were appraised against the Sustainability Appraisal Framework and those options which were considered to be the most sustainable were identified. Where negative sustainability impacts were identified, appropriate mitigation measures were put forward to address these. The SA process, along with responses from public consultation, informed the selection of preferred options.

Where the option chosen was not the most sustainable, the justification for this was set out within the preferred options report.

### **Preferred Options**

Once the preferred options had been selected they were tested against the SA Framework and the potential negative impacts were identified. Mitigation measures were suggested. The preferred options were further refined based on the SA testing results.

### **Pre-Submission Publication**

The policies were further developed and refined using the results of the Preferred Options consultation and SA work undertaken. The Pre-Submission policies were tested against the SA Framework and the effects identified were considered. At this stage the policies were also considered alongside each other and it emerged that the positive effects of some policies would mitigate the negative effects of others. The secondary, cumulative, and synergistic effects were also considered at this stage.

### **Public Involvement**

Stakeholder consultation is a key part of the SA/SEA process. Consultation has taken place on the SA/SEA work throughout the development of the Core Strategy. There have been four stages of formal consultation but comments have also been accepted throughout the process. The SEA Directive requires a 5 week consultation to be undertaken on the SA Scoping Report with the statutory environmental bodies (Environment Agency, English Heritage and Natural England) as a minimum. It is desirable for other bodies to also be consulted, additional bodies should be balanced between social, economic and environmental concerns. These bodies, as well as a large number of other organisations and individuals have been consulted at each subsequent stage of the development of the DPD and the SA.

The following provides a brief overview of the stages of consultation undertaken for the SA. Consultation at all stages has been carried out in accordance with the requirements of the Regulations and the District Council's Adopted Statement of Community Involvement.

### **SA Scoping Report Consultation**

The Council undertook a consultation on the Core Strategy SA Scoping Report from 16<sup>th</sup> March – 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2007. At this stage, the statutory environmental bodies were consulted, along with a number of other organisations covering social, economic and environmental interests.

The consultation sought to:

- Ensure the SA methodology is comprehensive and robust enough to support the DPD during the later stages of full public consultation and examination.
- Advise on the appropriateness of the sustainability objectives.
- Advise on the appropriateness of the key sustainability issues.
- Advise on the comprehensiveness of the baseline data.

The Core Strategy SA Scoping Report presented the draft SA Framework. This consisted of a number of sustainability objectives, each with its own set of decision-making questions to enable the person carrying out the SA to consistently address the impact of the various options being tested. The SA Framework was refined as a result of representations received and was used as the basis for assessing the sustainability of policy options throughout the development of the Core Strategy DPD.

### **Initial SA Report**

This report was published for consultation alongside the Core Strategy Issues and Options Paper for a period of six weeks commencing during July 2007. This report tested the Core Strategy objectives against the SA objectives and provided sustainability information relating to the issues and options identified.

### **Draft SA Report**

This report was published alongside the Preferred Options Paper for a period of six weeks commencing in January 2009. This report tested all of the options put forward in the Revised Issues and Options Paper against the SA Framework and provided information relating to their potential positive and negative impacts. This report informed the selection of the Preferred Options and both the SA Report and the Preferred Options Report set out information relating to the sustainability of the options selected. Where the most sustainable option was not selected, the reasons for this were set out within the Preferred Options Paper.

### **Final SA Report**

The Final SA Report was published alongside the Pre-Submission Publication Core Strategy in January 2010. This report set out information relating to the sustainability of the policies within the Pre-Submission Publication Core Strategy. Before this report was produced, consultants UE Associates were appointed to undertake an independent check of the SA work completed to date. The Final SA Report drew on the report detailing their findings. Representations received at this stage were forwarded to the Examining Inspector for his consideration.

### **Future Stages**

The Core Strategy was adopted on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2010. This statement has been made available alongside the Adopted Core Strategy on the District Council's website and has also been sent to the statutory bodies in accordance with Regulation 36 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 as amended by The Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England)(Amendment) Regulations 2008.

The SA process is continuous and the sustainability effects of the plan will be monitored using those sustainability indicators set out within the Final SA Report. Monitoring information will be set out within the Annual Monitoring Report which is published in December of each year and is available to download from the District Council's website.

### **Further Information**

A full copy of the Core Strategy Final Sustainability Appraisal Report (January 2010) can be downloaded from the website: [www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk](http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk)