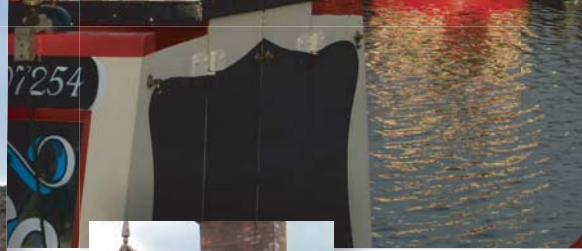


Wyre Forest District Council

SITE ALLOCATIONS AND POLICIES LOCAL PLAN SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL (SA) / STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA) ADOPTION STATEMENT

JULY 2013



Wyre Forest District Council

SITE ALLOCATIONS AND POLICIES LOCAL PLAN

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1	Introduction	2
2	Background to Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)	2
3	How does this Relate to the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan?	2
4	Purpose of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) /Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Adoption Statement	3
5	What Difference has the Process Made?	3
5.1	Scoping	3
5.2	Refining Options and Establishing Effects	4
5.3	Preferred Options	4
5.4	Pre-Submission Publication	5
6	Public Involvement	6
6.1	Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Scoping Report Consultation	6
6.2	Draft Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Report	6
6.3	Final Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Report	6
6.4	Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Update	6
7	Future Stages	7
8	Further Information	7

1 Introduction

1.0.1 Wyre Forest District Council adopted its Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan on 24th July 2013. This statement has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (16) (3) and (4) which require 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 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.

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

2 Background to Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

2.0.1 SA is required by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Strategic Environmental Assessment is required by European Directive EC/2001/42(SEA), which is 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 SA Report.

2.0.2 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.

3 How does this Relate to the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan?

3.0.1 SA/SEA has been undertaken for the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan at each stage of its development. The SA/SEA work has been undertaken by the District Council's 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 URSUS which looked at all of the work undertaken up until the preparation of the Final SA Report and made recommendations to be considered in the development of the Final SA Report.

3.0.2 SA reports have been prepared at each stage in the development of the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan 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 Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan. This also provides an audit trail of the SA/SEA process.

3.0.3 The purpose of the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan is to allocate specific sites for particular types of development in order to meet the targets for residential, retail and office development set out within the Adopted Core Strategy. The Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan also sets out detailed development management policies to guide the determination of planning applications. These policies cover a number of issues relating to residential development, business development, safeguarding the character of the landscape and townscape, delivering a green infrastructure network and protecting the District's Green Belt land from inappropriate development.

3.0.4 The Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan was adopted on 24th July 2013.

4 Purpose of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) /Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Adoption Statement

4.0.1 The District Council are required to prepare a statement upon adoption of a plan or programme which has been subject to SA/SEA summarising the following:

- How the full findings of the SA process have been taken into account within the plan or programme; and
- How sustainability considerations more generally have been integrated into the plan or programme.

4.0.2 Full details of the SA/SEA process are set out within the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan Final SA Report (July 2012).

5 What Difference has the Process Made?

5.0.1 SA is a multi-stage process and each stage has informed the preparation of the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan. The following sets out how each of the various stages influenced the development of the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan.

5.1 Scoping

5.1.1 Prior to commencing work on the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan, the District Council prepared an SA Scoping Report to set out the baseline data for the District in relation to a number of areas, how other plans, policies and programmes have been considered and their implications for the SA process, as well as the SA framework. The SA framework consists of 21 objectives, relating to social, economic and environmental issues, which the sites and policies put forward were tested against. The assessment made assumptions about their possible effect on the baseline data.

5.1.2 The SA Scoping Report was subject to a five week consultation period which allowed key stakeholders the opportunity to comment on the the report and specifically invited consultees to comment on the plans, policies and programmes considered, the baseline data presented and the SA framework. All representations were fully considered and a Revised SA Scoping Report was prepared and published in January 2009 alongside the Site Allocations and Policies Issues and Options Paper.

5.2 Refining Options and Establishing Effects

5.2.1 A number of options were considered in relation to both the potential development sites and the policy content of the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan. All of those sites included within the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) were tested against the SA framework as well as any sites which were put forward for consideration at the Issues and Options consultation stage. The baseline data, as well as data available from the evidence base studies, informed the testing of the options. A number of policy options for employment land were also considered. All of the policy options set out in the Issues and Options Paper were tested against the SA framework. Where negative impacts were identified either in relation to specific sites, or policy options, appropriate mitigation measures were set out within the SA Report.

5.2.2 A number of potential site options for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites were tested against the SA framework. These options were taken from a specialist report undertaken by consultants Baker Associates to look at potential sites within the District. All of those sites which were identified as potentially suitable were tested against the SA framework.

5.2.3 All of the sites assessed for potential, residential, employment or Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople use were ranked according to their sustainability based on the results of the SA testing. It was recommended that only sites scoring 1 or 2 were taken forward, however a small number of residential sites which ranked 3 were taken forward specifically to meet the requirements for rural affordable housing.

5.2.4 The SA testing informed the selection of the preferred options. A number of sites were discounted following the adoption of the Core Strategy because they were not in conformity with the development strategy set out. The findings of the SA process were fundamental in determining the preferred sites and selecting and refining policy options.

5.3 Preferred Options

5.3.1 A number of changes were made to the policies following consultation on the Preferred Options. These changes were tested against the SA framework and the results informed a process of further refining policies and identifying appropriate mitigation measures where negative effects were identified. The secondary, cumulative and synergistic effects of the plan were also considered to identify any potential negative effects arising from the policies of the plan in combination with each other and the plan in combination with other plans, policies and programmes. All of the potential secondary effects identified were positive. The assessment of cumulative and synergistic effects raised some concerns, however, these were appropriately addressed through mitigation measures which were worked into the policies.

5.4 Pre-Submission Publication

5.4.1 The Final Sustainability Appraisal Report was published alongside the Pre-Submission Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan in order to provide the relevant environmental information to support the consultation. The main recommendations arising from the SA process were:

- Ensure that site specific policies for sites at risk of flooding highlight the issue and cross-reference to flood risk policies as a minimum. Where flood risk is a significant issue, site specific policies should set out greater detail on the issue.
- Site specific policies should set out where the redevelopment of a site will lead to a requirement for new transport infrastructure within or outside of the site.
- Site specific policies should identify where a specific contribution will be expected to be made to the green infrastructure network.
- The Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan should set out specific policies on safeguarding green infrastructure.
- Site specific policies should identify buildings of historic interest which are to be retained whether they are nationally listed or not. Site specific policies should also set out clear design requirements where opportunities exist to make particular enhancements.
- The Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan should include a detailed policy on design.
- Any allocated sites which currently have community facilities on them should have policies requiring that the facility is to be replaced unless it is demonstrated that it is no longer required.
- The Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan should include a policy to safeguard community facilities.
- Site specific policies should set out where noise or light pollution is considered to be a specific issue and require developers to address this.

5.4.2 All of these recommendations were addressed within the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan.

5.4.3 During the Examination in Public process, a number of amendments to the Plan were suggested by the District Council in order to overcome issues raised in representations made at the Pre-Submission Publication stage. These amendments arose from the process of developing Statements of Common Ground with interested parties, and from discussions taking place at the hearing sessions. The amendments fell into two categories; minor amendments and main modifications. The main modifications required further SA work to be undertaken and the findings of this work were published alongside the main modifications for consultation. No additional adverse effects were identified as a result of the changes suggested.

5.4.4 The SA process has helped to ensure that the plan adopted is the most sustainable when considered against the reasonable alternatives. The different stages of the SA process explained throughout this section have helped to rule out options which raised significant negative effects. The SA process has led to a number of amendments to the plan as set out above. For these reasons, the adopted Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan is considered to be the most appropriate plan to guide the future sustainable development of this area.

6 Public Involvement

6.0.1 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 Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan.

6.1 Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Scoping Report Consultation

6.1.1 The District Council undertook a consultation on the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan SA Scoping Report between 30th April and 6th June 2008. The representations received were incorporated into the Revised SA Scoping Report which was published alongside the Issues and Options Paper in January 2009. As well as the statutory consultees (English Heritage, The Environment Agency and Natural England), a range of bodies were consulted representing social, economic and environmental interests. Consultation was undertaken by writing to consultees, either electronically or in hard copy, and by placing a copy of the SA Scoping Report in the libraries and Worcestershire Hubs within the District and on the District Council's web-site.

6.2 Draft Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Report

6.2.1 Consultation on the Draft SA Report took place between 26th May and 8th July 2011 alongside the Preferred Options Report. The Draft SA report provided information on the sustainability of the policies and sites set out within the Preferred Options Report. Representations made were considered in the drafting of the Final SA Report.

6.3 Final Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Report

6.3.1 The Final SA Report was published for consultation alongside the Pre-Submission Publication version of the Plan. Consultation took place between 23rd July and 14th September 2012. This report set out information relating to the sustainability of the policies and sites within the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan. Before this report was produced, consultants URSUS were engaged to undertake an independent check of the SA work undertaken. The consultants report was used in the development of the Final SA Report and this was then considered by the consultants. Representations received at this stage were forwarded to The Planning Inspectorate for consideration as part of the examination process.

6.4 Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Update

6.4.1 A number of the changes made following the Publication of the Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan were considered to be main modifications which required additional SA work to be undertaken. The results of this work were published in the Sustainability Appraisal Update which was made available for consultation alongside the proposed main modifications. This consultation was undertaken by the Examining Inspector during February/March 2013. The representations made at this stage informed the drafting of the Inspector's Report.

7 Future Stages

7.0.1 The Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan was adopted on 24th July 2013. This statement has been made available on the District Council's web-site, alongside the Adopted Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan, and has also been sent to the statutory bodies in accordance with Regulation 16 of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

7.0.2 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 made available through the District Council's Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) which is published annually and covers the period from 1st April to 31st March each year. The most up-to-date AMR is available to download from the District Council's web-site.

8 Further Information

8.0.1 All of the Sustainability Appraisal Reports are available to download free of charge from the District Council's web-site. Electronic copies of these reports can also be viewed at the District's libraries or at the Worcestershire Hub in Kidderminster. Arrangements can be made for viewing a hard copy of any of these documents by contacting the Planning Policy Team on 01562 732928.