



Mid Sussex District Council Local Development Framework Small Scale Housing Allocations Development Plan Document

Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment Adoption Statement

Introduction

Mid Sussex District Council adopted the Local Development Framework (LDF) Small Scale Housing Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) on the 16th April 2008.

This statement has been prepared in accordance with 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 (sustainability) considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme;
2. How the Environmental Report (Sustainability 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 ODPM guidance, 'Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents' widens these considerations to include broader sustainability issues (i.e. economic and social issues), so that this statement provides information on the wider sustainability appraisal process.

This statement examines each of these points in turn.

1. How environmental (sustainability) considerations have been integrated into the plan.

The final Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Report for the Small Scale Housing Allocations DPD sets out the baseline information about the District to help identify the environmental and sustainability issues affecting the plan area, both now and in the future.

In addition to the baseline information, the final SA/SEA Report identifies the key plans, policies and guidance that have influenced the content of the Small Scale Housing Allocations DPD. This has enabled sustainability issues affecting the District to be identified. This has included environmental issues. The issues that were identified informed the sustainability objectives, against which the options for the Small Scale Housing Allocations DPD were assessed. By having a number of objectives that reflected current environmental issues ensured that the most sustainable options were generally the most beneficial/least detrimental in environmental, economic and social terms. The identification of environmental issues, as well as economic and social issues, also helped shape the policy requirements for each site that has been allocated in the DPD (i.e. the requirements for an ecological survey, flood risk assessment, etc).

2. How the Environmental Report (Sustainability Report) has been taken into account.

The SA/SEA has contributed to the development of the Small Scale Housing Allocations DPD by providing an independent assessment on the sustainability of the policy (site) options considered as well as the policies put forward by the Council during the production of the DPD. The SA/SEA demonstrates how sustainability considerations have been incorporated into the development of the Small Scale Housing Allocations DPD. It also provides an audit trail and formal statement on the consideration and assessment of all policy options.

The SA/SEA was prepared alongside and in support of the Small Scale Housing Allocations DPD. It was reflected within and supported the draft DPD that was subject to public consultation both at the Preferred Options and Submission stages.

The SA/SEA process began with the production of the Scoping Report. This involved identifying the current baseline situation for Mid Sussex, along with the sustainability issues and objectives that were linked to a number of indicators. The identification of environmental baseline information, issues and objectives was a key part of this document. Statutory environmental bodies along with a number of other consultees were invited to comment on this document.

The comments received on the Scoping Report helped create a final set of sustainability objectives, which were used to test a number of options as well as the policies that were identified at both the Preferred Options and Submission stages. The options that were tested were generally in the form of different sites that were being considered for inclusion within the DPD.

The significant effects of the options and subsequent policies were analysed against the sustainability objectives. This enabled the potential economic, social and environmental impacts of each potential policy/allocation to be identified. Those options that had the most negative potential economic, social and environmental impacts were not recommended for inclusion within the DPD. The opposite was the

case for those options that were identified as having a number of potential positive impacts. Section 6 of the SA/SEA Report details this information.

The draft policies included within the Preferred Options and Submission documents, together with the policies in the adopted document were analysed against the sustainability objectives. This involved assessing the impacts in the short, medium and long-term as well as any cumulative, secondary and synergistic impacts. The assessment of the adopted policies can be viewed in Section 7 of the SA/SEA Report.

Following the assessment of the effects of the policies, measures to limit and mitigate against environmental, social and economic impacts of the policy allocations were identified. These measures were generally in the form of certain policy requirements for the allocations (i.e. the need for ecological enhancements to be incorporated into the development, the need to undertake a flood risk assessment and ensure that any built development avoids areas identified as at risk from flooding). Some other mitigation measures already existed, such as Local Plan policies on subjects such as design. Section 7 of the SA/SEA Report identifies the mitigation measures in more detail.

As a result of the SA/SEA analysis, policies have been modified at various stages in their development to make them more sustainable. This has included introducing policy requirements to minimise environmental impacts of certain allocations and in a number of instances to ensure environmental improvements are incorporated into the proposed housing development.

3. How opinions expressed through public consultation have been taken into account.

Key Environmental Bodies

The Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive requires that the authorities referred to in Article 6(3) shall be consulted when deciding upon the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the Environmental Report. In England the key bodies are the Environment Agency, English Heritage and Natural England (formerly English Nature and the Countryside Agency).

Public Participation

The Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive requires the public to have an early and effective opportunity within appropriate timeframes to express their opinion on the draft plan or programme, and the accompanying Environmental Report, before the adoption of the plan or programme or its submission to the legislative procedure. The District Council undertook a programme of public consultation on the plan and its SA/SEA prior to submission to the Secretary of State. Full details can be found in the Statement of Compliance (May 2006) for the Small Scale Housing Allocations Submission Document. This statement can be viewed at: <http://www.midsussex.gov.uk/Nimoi/sites/msdcpublic/resources/statement%20of%20compliance%2Epdf>

Consultation under Regulation 25

Key Environmental Bodies

In January 2005 the key environmental bodies were consulted on the SA/SEA Scoping Report. They were invited to comment on the appropriateness of the objectives and indicators, as well as any other comments they considered were

relevant. Apart from English Heritage, comments were received from all the key environmental bodies as well as a couple of the neighbouring authorities and Parish Councils. The vast majority of comments received from these organisations were incorporated into the Sustainability Appraisal process for the Small Scale Housing Allocations DPD. Section 4 of the SA/SEA Report details these comments and how they have been incorporated into the SA/SEA process in more detail.

Public Participation

Public consultation at this stage provided the public with an opportunity to participate in the formulation and assessment of options, before decisions were to be made on the approach to be taken in the Preferred Options Report.

The form this consultation took was generally direct consultation with all the Town and Parish Council's or through attending the three Area Community Forums that exist in Mid Sussex. A summary of the main issues raised and outcomes from these consultations can be found in Appendix C of the Statement of Compliance.

Consultation under Regulation 26

The Small Scale Housing Allocations – Preferred Options Document together with the Draft SA/SEA Report were published for public consultation in May 2005 for a 6-week period. Section 3.0 of the Statement of Compliance provides details on how this consultation was undertaken. A total of 1831 individuals and stakeholders submitted 2831 separate representations on the Preferred Options Document with a further 273 representations being made on the SA/SEA Report.

As a result of this consultation, a number of the allocations/policies in the Small Scale Housing Allocations Document were replaced or modified. Examples of this included where environmental bodies requested additional policy criteria to be included for certain allocations, or where new sites were submitted to the District Council that were subsequently found to be more sustainable than certain sites included within the Preferred Options Document, as identified through the SA/SEA process, and therefore included within the Submission Document.

Submission

The Small Scale Housing Allocations Document was submitted to the Secretary of State on the 22nd May 2006. The SA/SEA Report accompanied this document. A total of 841 representations were received on these documents from 200 organisations and individuals. These representations were considered by an independent Inspector through the Examination in Public.

4. The reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with.

The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (12) (2) requires environmental reports to examine reasonable alternatives for the plan or programme whilst taking into account the objectives and scope of the plan or programme. This statement is required to set out the reasons for choosing the plan as adopted in light of other reasonable alternatives dealt with.

PPS12 (Local Development Frameworks) highlights the fact that regard should be had to the chain of conformity to avoid duplication of assessment. As well as the emerging South East Plan, the Small Scale Housing Allocations DPD has been prepared to be in conformity with the requirements of the West Sussex Structure Plan, in particular policies LOC1 (housing location) and NE1 (housing need). As a

result of this the number of available reasonable alternatives that could be considered in the production of the DPD has been limited to an extent (i.e. an alternative of allocating all the housing sites on previously delivered land was not able to be considered as this would of meant the DPD would not of been in conformity with Policy NE1). Despite this a significant number of alternative sites were examined and subject to the SA/SEA process during the production of the DPD.

The sustainability objectives identified as part of the SA/SEA process were used to test a number of these alternative site options that could of potentially been included in the Small Scale Housing Allocations DPD. The results of this assessment work helped inform the decision as to which site options should be included in the DPD. It is considered that in most instances the most sustainable options have been selected. Where this has not been the case it is as a result of other wider considerations, such as uncertainty over the deliverability of a site for housing. Section 6 of the SA/SEA Report provides further detail on the assessment of alternative site options.

5. The measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan or programme.

Following the publication of the Inspector's Report, the SA/SEA has been updated as necessary and is now published alongside the adopted Small Scale Housing Allocations DPD. Despite this, the SA/SEA process does not finish with the publication of this document. The effect of the adopted DPD on the sustainability objectives identified in this document will need to be monitored on an annual basis. Linked to the sustainability objectives are a number of indicators that, where feasible, will be included within the District Council's Annual Monitoring Report. The results of this monitoring will be considered in any subsequent reviews of the Small Scale Housing Allocations DPD. This will also ensure that any unforeseen effects, which have not been identified in the SA/SEA Report, can be acted upon in a timely manner.

The Mid Sussex District Council Annual Monitoring Report is available to view on the District Council's website.