



## **Mid Sussex District Council Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment Adoption Statement:**

### **Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan**

#### **Introduction**

Mid Sussex District Council authorised making the Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan part of the Development Plan at Full Council on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2014. The Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan has subsequently been made on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2014.

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.

This is in line with the Planning Practice Guidance (March 2014) Paragraph: 004 Reference ID: 11-004-20140306 and this statement examines each of these points in turn.

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

The Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Report for the Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan sets out the baseline information about the Parish of Cuckfield as the Neighbourhood Plan Area. It identifies the environmental and sustainability issues affecting the plan area, both now and in the future.

In addition to the baseline information, the SA/SEA Report identifies the key plans, policies and guidance that have influenced the content of the Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan. This has enabled sustainability issues affecting the Neighbourhood Plan Area to be identified. This has included environmental issues. The issues that were identified informed the sustainability objectives, against which the options for the Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan 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 Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan.

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

The SA/SEA has contributed to the development of the Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan by providing an independent assessment of the policy site options considered as well as the policies put forward by Cuckfield Parish Council. The SA/SEA demonstrates how sustainability considerations have been taken into account and provides an audit trail and formal statement on the consideration and assessment of all policy options.

The SA/SEA was prepared alongside the Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan by Cuckfield Parish Council. It was reflected within and supported the draft Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan that was subjected to public consultation both at the Neighbourhood Plan Regulation 14 Pre Submission Stage and the Regulation 16 Publicity Period conducted by Mid Sussex District Council as the Local Planning Authority.

The SA/SEA process began with the production of the Scoping Report. This involved identifying the current baseline situation for Cuckfield, 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 Pre Submission Regulation 14 stage and the Submission Publicity Period at Regulation 16 stage.

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 Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan. The opposite was the case for those options that were identified as having a number of potential positive impacts. Section 5 of the SA/SEA Report details this information.

The draft policies included within the Pre Submission Regulation 14 and the Publicity Period at Regulation 16 stage 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.

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, and to respect the surrounding character such as that of the Conservation Area).

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 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 to be included in the Environmental Report. In England the key bodies are the Environment Agency, English Heritage and Natural England.

#### 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 Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan Sustainability Appraisal was consulted upon along the Cuckfield Neighbourhood for six weeks at the Neighbourhood Plan Regulation 14 stage and then for a further six weeks alongside the Neighbourhood Plan Regulation 16 Publicity Period.

The Sustainability Appraisal and policies within the Neighbourhood Plan were amended to take into account representations received at the Neighbourhood Plan Regulation 14 stage.

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

The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes 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 or programme as 'made' in light of other reasonable alternatives dealt with.

The Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan has been 'made' on the recommendations of a suitably qualified Independent Examiner. No new evidence has been brought to the attention of Mid Sussex District Council since the Examination took place to bring into question those recommendations. During the Neighbourhood Planning process 3 separate consultations were held. The first was that of the Sustainability Scoping Report to consider the baseline data and sustainability objectives. The second consultation included the Neighbourhood Plan with its policies and site allocations which had been tested against reasonable alternatives such as not having a neighbourhood plan or not allocating sites. Subsequently changes and modifications were incorporated take into account representations received. The Neighbourhood Plan and Sustainability Appraisal were then published for a further consultation prior to the Independent Examination.

#### **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 examiner's report, the SA/SEA has been updated as necessary and is now published alongside the Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan. Despite this, the SA/SEA process does not finish with the publication of this document. The effect of the Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan will need to be monitored using the Sustainability Objectives identified contained in the Cuckfield SA/SEA. Linked to the sustainability objectives are a number of indicators that, where feasible, will be included within Mid Sussex District Council's Monitoring Reports and by Cuckfield Parish Council. The results of this monitoring will then be considered and inform any review of the Cuckfield Neighbourhood Plan. 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.