

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR PLANNING AND COMMUNITY STRATEGY
TO THE EXECUTIVE
2 MARCH 2007

Draft Local Development Framework Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report

1 Introduction and Report Summary

- 1.1 Under Section 39(2) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, Sustainability Appraisal is mandatory for new Development Plan Documents (DPDs). This puts into effect the requirements of European Directive 2001/42/EC on the Strategic Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes on the Environment which came into effect by regulations produced in 2004. The now Department for Communities and Local Government produced guidance in November 2005 on the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of Local Development Documents.
- 1.2 The first stage in the SA process (Stage A) is the production of a Scoping Report. This serves as the foundation for the SA of the Vale's Core Strategy. Essentially it provides the information relating to the area and other background information together with a suggested assessment framework.
- 1.3 Consultation on the document has to be undertaken with the now three designated environmental bodies (English Heritage, the Environment Agency and Natural England) and any other bodies or persons that the Council considers necessary. Following any amendments arising out of the consultation the background information and the framework will be used to assess the sustainability of the Core Strategy. A final SA Report has to be produced to accompany the Core Strategy DPD when submitted to the Secretary of State.
- 1.4 A draft Scoping Report was considered by the Structure And Local Plan Advisory Group 3rd January 2007. The report has been modified in response to comments made at that meeting and subsequently in response to comments by other Members.
- 1.5 The Contact Officer for this report is Peter Williams, Principal Planning Officer, (01235 520202)

2 Recommendations

(a) that the Executive approves the Draft Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report as contained in the appendix to this report, and

(b) that the public and relevant organisations are consulted in accordance with the provisions of the Council's Statement of Community Involvement.

3 Relationship with the Council's Vision, Strategies and Policies

- (a) A, B, C and F.
- (b) this report principally relates to the Local Development Framework Core Strategy and through this has a connection to most of the Council's strategies

4 Background and Supporting Information

- 4.1 The first element of the Scoping Report (A1) is the identification of relevant policies, plans, programmes and sustainability objectives. In the Government advice this process can involve

the review of a very large number of documents ranging from international documents such as the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development, through national documents such as the Planning Policy Statements, then regional documents such as the Regional Economic Development Strategy and finally locally significant documents such as crime and disorder strategies.

- 4.2 Following advice by Riki Therivel, one of the authors of the original ODPM guidance on SA, it is considered that the review of documentation can be limited to those below regional level as all significant international, national and regional documentation will have been examined in the South East Plan's review of plans and programmes. Reviewing the same documents would be an unnecessary duplication of effort. This approach is therefore used as the basis for the Vale's review of relevant documents for the SA process. Other Councils which have not taken this approach have included reviews running to over 100 pages.
- 4.3 The outputs from the review of plans is used to help generate the sustainability objectives on which the sustainability assessment will be based. This will ensure that the objectives are as all encompassing as possible.
- 4.4 The second element of the SA (A2) is the collection of baseline information. Essentially this presents statistical information about the area across all the topic areas to be covered in a DPD. As this is for a core strategy the range in this case is very broad. Comparison data is included in each case where available so it is clear whether the situation is good or bad and by how much as well as what the future is expected to hold and whether the situation can be improved if necessary.
- 4.5 In order to present the information in an easily understood manner a narrative rather than tabular approach has been taken to the presentation of the information. The information has been assembled from a wide range of sources and will form the basis of monitoring of the effects of the DPD.
- 4.6 Partly deriving from this statistical information is the third part of the scoping report (A3) which involves the identification of sustainability issues and problems. Many of these problems are already recognised in the adopted Local Plan and other related documents. This section therefore consists of a list of known issues which relate to supporting data. The purpose of this section is also to help define sustainability objectives which can be used to assess the DPD.
- 4.7 The final part of the scoping report is the development of the sustainability appraisal framework (A4). This will be used as the basis for an assessment of the sustainability implications of the DPD's policies and proposals. It consists of a range of sustainability objectives which, where practicable, relate to specific targets and indicators. The effects of each policy and proposal are then ascertained by scoring the effect against each objective to gain an overall score. As set out in the draft report this will be on the basis of scoring effects with a + or - symbol where possible with a 0 for a balanced effect and a ? for an indeterminate effect.
- 4.8 The guidance from the Government is that the range of objectives, indicators and targets should be manageable. Two Councils in Oxfordshire have used 17 and 25 objectives. The SA will then have to set out what, if any, mitigation for any overall adverse sustainability effects is possible in the form of a policy or proposal.
- 4.9 Following approval by the Executive the three mandatory consultees will be asked for their comments. At the same time stakeholders will be informed that the SA Scoping Report is available and asked to comment. This will be in accordance with the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement. Any comments which are received will be considered to see if the any part of the scoping report should be modified. Following any modification the sustainability framework and its subsequent approval of any changes by the Executive it will be used as the basis for assessing the sustainability of the Core Strategy during its development.

RODGER HOOD
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (Planning and Community Strategy)

TIM SADLER
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR

Background Papers:-

Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents
(November 2005)