

**Horsham District Council  
The Core Strategy (2007)**

**Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment  
Adoption Statement**

Horsham District Council adopted the Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) on 2 February 2007.

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 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 taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan or programme.

Planning Policy Statement 12 widens these considerations from environmental, to broader sustainability issues, so that this statement provides information on the wider sustainability appraisal process.

This statement examines each of these points in turn.

**1. How sustainability considerations have been integrated into the plan**

The final Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) of the Core Strategy report sets out the baseline information about the District to help identify the environmental and sustainability issues affecting the area. This includes key facts about the District and the implications for the future. The context for the future strategy is essentially one of seeking to maintain the delicate balance between the various interests or values within and influencing the District, in order to continue to improve the quality of life for all.

By examining the requirements of the plans and policies influencing the Core Strategy as well as findings of the baseline data, the sustainability issues affecting the District were identified. Taking into account the sustainability issues, a range of sustainability objectives were developed against which the Local Development Framework options were assessed. The main sustainability issues facing the District are; development

pressure threatening the character, biodiversity and historical features in the District and the need for affordable housing and employment provision.

A vision statement has been adopted as the basis for the spatial vision for the Core Strategy, it is as follows ‘A dynamic district where people care and where individuals from all backgrounds can get involved in their communities and share the benefits of a district that enjoys a high quality of life’. The key visions for the district are to be a place where people;

- have the opportunity of a secure, affordable and pleasant home to live;
- have access to excellent leisure and cultural facilities;
- have access to a healthy and sustainable economy that is diverse and supported by a broadly skilled workforce which enables local business to succeed;
- enhance, protect and value both rural and urban environments.

A set of spatial objectives have been defined which aim to deliver this vision through the development of core policies.

**Spatial Objective 1) To protect and enhance the diverse character and local distinctiveness of the District** – this will be addressed through the application of policies which will ensure that both the quality and key characteristics of the District’s biodiversity and landscape character areas, including the distinct and separate character of settlements, are retained and, where possible, enhanced.

**Spatial Objective 2) To integrate the need for protection of the natural, built and historic environment (including the natural resources) of the District with the need to allow the continued evolution of both the countryside and the character and environment of settlements** – this will be achieved through the high quality management of the environment and the application of appropriate policies and careful control over new development as the countryside and the settlements change and adapt to economic and social needs.

**Spatial Objective 3) To ensure that new development in the District is of high quality** – it is intended to ensure a better form and inclusive design of new development which optimises the potential of land that has to be developed, is accessible to all sections of the community, complements the character and heritage of the District and contributes to the sense of place.

**Spatial Objective 4) To enable the provision of a sufficient number of dwellings to meet the requirements of regional planning policy to 2018, including that specified by the West Sussex Structure Plan 2001-2016** - this will include ensuring that there is an appropriate mix of types, sizes and tenures, particularly to address affordable housing needs. Provision will be based on the application of the sequential approach to development, with the priority towards redevelopment of previously-developed land and major development in strategic locations, with the programmed release of land for development as necessary.

**Spatial Objective 5) To provide for business and employment development needs, particularly for existing local businesses** – this will include provision for the development for sufficient employment floorspace to meet the requirements for the

period to 2018, including that identified in the West Sussex Structure Plan 2001-2016 and to enable a range of sizes and types of employment sites and premises to meet modern business needs.

**Spatial Objective 6) To meet the diverse needs of the communities and businesses of the District** - it is necessary to ensure that there is provision for appropriate new development, particularly for existing local businesses and affordable housing for local people, which is supported by the necessary infrastructure, facilities and services; and that existing local facilities or services are protected or enhanced wherever possible.

**Spatial Objective 7) To promote and enhance community leisure and recreation facilities and to assist the development of appropriate tourism and cultural facilities** – appropriate protection of existing facilities and new or enhanced provision will be secured through the application of relevant planning policies derived from the analysis of needs within communities and generally within the District.

**Spatial Objective 8) To enhance the vitality and viability of Horsham town centre and the centres of the smaller towns and villages in the District** – it is intended to enable their continued evolution and increased diversity through the application of appropriate policies for retail or related development, including in terms of the evening economy where applicable.

**Spatial Objective 9) To reduce the expected growth in car based travel by seeking to provide choice in modes of transport wherever possible** – this will be addressed in land use terms by regulating the location of new development relative to transport modes and by setting a hierarchy for new development which gives preference to people and sustainable modes of transport, rather than the car.

The Core Strategy also includes a series of indicators that will be monitored through the LDF Annual Monitoring Report. This enables the impact of the plan to be monitored and the plan to be reviewed if it is required.

## **2. How the Sustainability Appraisal has been taken into account**

The SA/SEA has contributed to the development of plans by providing an independent assessment of the sustainability of the Council's proposed options and policies during the development process. It clearly demonstrates that sustainability considerations have been incorporated into the development of the Core Strategy from the initial stages and provides a formal statement and audit trail of the assessment.

The SA/SEA was prepared in support of the Core Strategy and Site Specific Allocation of Land DPDs and was a key output of the plan preparation process. It reflected and supported the draft plan on which formal public consultation and participation was carried out.

The process began with preparation of the Sustainability Appraisal: Identifying Issues and Targets Document, this set out the results of the first stages of collection of

information about the District, plans and strategies affecting the LDF and proposals for sustainability objectives and indicators. This was followed by publication of the Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Local Development Framework – Scoping Report, the report identified sustainability issues affecting the District, and set out an updated set of sustainability objectives and indicators for comment. The document also set out the LDF options to be assessed to help inform which options would be progressed to the Preferred Options stage. This formed a useful part of the evidence base for the early stages of plan preparation.

The information gathered helped to create the final set of sustainability objectives which could be used to test emerging options and policies. The sustainability objectives were assessed against each other and the Local Development Framework objectives, to determine their compatibility with each other. A set of indicators was also created to measure the contribution the LDF makes to each objective.

The significant effects of the options and subsequent policies were analysed against the sustainability objectives, which provide information on their economic, social and environmental impact. Analysis included the scale and nature of the impact, cumulative, secondary and synergistic impacts. The assessment matrices are in appendices 7 and 8 of the Final report and a summary of the assessment can be found in chapters 8 and 9.

Having analysed the impact of the proposed plans, where a possible impact was identified mitigation measures were indicated to improve the sustainability of the plan. The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant effects on the environment, as well as social and economic objectives, are summarised in chapter 9 of the final SA/SEA document. A number of changes were made to plan options and subsequently plan policies, as a result of the analysis in both the Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Local Development Framework - Draft Final Report and Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Core Strategy and Site Specific Allocations of Land - Final Report.

### **3. How consultations entered into have been taken into account**

#### **Key Environmental Bodies**

The Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive requires that authorities referred to in Article 6(3) shall be consulted when deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information which 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).

Consultation with these key bodies was carried out firstly in November 2003 on the Sustainability Appraisal: Identifying Issues and Targets document. The consultation enabled these bodies to comment on the appropriateness of the objectives, indicators, baseline information, issues/problems and plans and policies influencing the LDF. The consultation led to a number of changes to the resulting Scoping Report, new sources of baseline information were included, for example further information on cultural heritage and references to biodiversity were enhanced. Comments made on

the objectives and indicators suggested that the objectives needed to be specific to the District rather than using those at a regional level. In response to this, objectives were developed to reflect the local situation as well as taking into account the requirements of the higher level objectives. Other comments suggested indicators that could be used and, where possible, these were incorporated.

### **Public Participation**

The Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive requires early and effective opportunity within appropriate time frames 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 Council undertook a programme of public participation 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 (Regulation 28 Statement) in Appendix H of The Core Strategy (2007).

### **Consultation under Regulation 25**

#### Statutory Bodies Consultation

The Council carried out an initial consultation with statutory bodies on all the matters which would be covered by the DPDs, as required under the new system of plan making, to ensure that it was aware, at an early stage of any programmes and plans that would affect the LDF. This took place under the “jumping the gun” regulations in the lead up to the new system of plan making which did not come into force until September 2004. The consultation took the form of a letter highlighting general issues relating to the proposed Development Plan Documents and seeking comments on issues that should be considered. The responses received were taken into account in preparing the Preferred Options Reports.

#### Issues and Options

Public consultation at this stage provided the public the opportunity to participate on options, before the decision was made on the preferred approach.

A total of 683 responses were received from consultees at the Issues and Options stage of the Core Strategy. A summary of the main issues raised and responses to the consultation can be found in appendix C of the Statement of Compliance (Regulation 28 Statement) The Core Strategy. The Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Local Development Framework – Scoping Report was also made available for comment as part of the Issues and Options consultation in June 2004. The Issues and Options documents were published in June 2004 and were subject to a six-week public participation period.

### **Consultation under Regulation 26**

The Preferred Options Core Strategy DPD together with the SA/SEA Draft Final Report allowed the public to consider the Council’s reasons for selecting their preferred options in the context of the SA/SEA report. The SA/SEA Draft Final Report appraised the set of options and assessed the cumulative and synergistic effects. It included an outline of the process of selecting and rejecting options.

Consultation was carried out for these documents for a six week period beginning February 2005. 520 representations were made on the Preferred Options Core Strategy and around 90 comments were submitted on the SA/SEA Document.

### **Submission**

On submission of the DPD accompanied by the SA/SEA Final Report a further 3069 representations were received which were considered by independent inspectors through the Examination process.

#### **4. Reasons for choosing the document as adopted in light of other reasonable alternatives**

The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (12) (2) requires environmental reports to examine reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme.

This statement is required to set out the reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with.

PPS12 highlights the fact that regard should be had to the chain of conformity to avoid duplication of assessment. The West Sussex Structure Plan provides a very clear strategy and sequence for development and is very specific in identifying the locations for strategic growth for example it allocates land west of Horsham and west of Crawley for development. This therefore limited the number of available reasonable alternatives as they would be contrary to this higher order plan. The Structure Plan was subject to Sustainability Appraisal and the plan preparation process involved assessment of a large number of potential alternative sites.

The sustainability objectives identified as part of the SA/SEA process were used to test a number of different alternative options that could potentially have been included in the Core Strategy. The results of this assessment work helped inform the decision as to which option should be included in the Core Strategy. In most instances the most sustainable option has been selected; where this did not take place it was a result of other wider considerations, such as high level requirements placed on the Council by the Government. The process is documented in the final Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Core Strategy including the reasons for scoping out alternative options.

#### **5. Monitoring**

Following the publication of the Inspectors' Report on the Core Strategy the SA/SEA has been updated as necessary, and is now published alongside the adopted Core Strategy (2007). The SA/SEA process does not, however, finish with the publication of this document; the effect of the Core Strategy on the Sustainability Objectives identified in this document will be monitored on an annual basis. The results of this monitoring will be included in the Annual Monitoring Report on the Local Development Framework. The results will feed into subsequent reviews of the Core

Strategy and will also help ensure that any unforeseen effects can be acted upon quickly.

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