

**PLANNING
FOR OUR FUTURE**



**HORSHAM DISTRICT
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

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LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK
TO 2018**

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY OF THE

**Sustainability Appraisal and
Strategic Environmental
Assessment**

of the

**General Development Control Policies
Development Plan Document**

December 2007

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NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Horsham District Council is working towards producing a Local Development Framework. (LDF) This framework will contain a range of Documents which will set out the policies for land-use planning in the District.

A key aim of the Local Development Framework is to ensure that it contributes to sustainable development. This means balancing social, environmental and economic needs both now and in the future. To help ensure that the Local Development Framework Documents are sustainable a Sustainability Appraisal has been undertaken incorporating the legal requirements of the "Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004". This non-technical summary sets out a summary of the findings of the assessment process.

THE GENERAL DEVELOPMENT CONTROL POLICY DOCUMENT

The General Development Control Policies Document forms part of the Local Development Framework, and has been written to provide more detail based on the policies which are set out in the Core Strategy. The General Development Control policies document shares the objectives of the Core Strategy and has been developed taking into account the wide range of requirements of a variety of documents, from international to local level. Documents include the national Planning Policy Statements, the West Sussex Structure Plan 2001-2016 and the Horsham District Community Strategy.

BASELINE DATA

In order to carry out a Sustainability Appraisal of the General Development Control policies document information was collected about the District as it is today. This information helps us understand how the District is today, and also how things may change in the future without a Local Development Framework. The overall findings can be summarised as follows:

- Economic
The District economy is generally strong with low unemployment levels. In future there is the potential for the low levels of employment to lead to skills shortages. One part of the economy that is not as buoyant as other sectors is the rural economy, which has declined over recent years.
- Social
Generally, the District has low levels of deprivation. Education levels are good and life expectancy is higher than the national average. Some pockets of deprivation do exist, and one particular problem facing the District is the difficulty faced by residents living in rural areas without a car reaching the services and facilities they need.
- Environment
Overall the District has a high quality environment. It has two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty; the High Weald and the Sussex Downs. It also has a range of habitats some of which are designated for their nature conservation importance. Levels of pollution are also low. There are, however, threats to the environment as a result of changing management techniques and development pressures.

SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES IN HORSHAM DISTRICT

The baseline information and the plans and policies influencing the LDF helped inform the sustainability issues affecting the District. These are as follows:

- Pressure for housing development, high house prices and lack of affordable housing
- Access to services and facilities can be difficult for those in rural areas without transport
- New services and facilities will need to be provided in areas of population growth
- Car ownership and use is high, contributing to congestion and climate change. At the same time public transport in the District is fairly limited.
- Fear of Crime
- Development pressure is threatening the character, biodiversity and historical features in the District
- Development in the District can contribute to, and be affected by, climate change. The potential for increased flooding is of concern
- Increasing demand for raw resources, including energy and water
- The need to continue to recycle, and the problem of fewer disposal options
- The need to maintain the high and stable economy
- The need to enhance the economy in rural areas
- The need to maintain and enhance town and village centres

THE SUSTAINABILITY FRAMEWORK

In order to assess how the plans and policies in the General Development Control Policies contribute to sustainability, a set of Sustainability Objectives were developed. These are set out below:

1. To ensure that everyone has access to good quality affordable homes that meets their needs
2. To ensure that everyone has access to the health, education, leisure and recreation facilities they require
3. To reduce crime and the fear of crime
4. To conserve and enhance the landscape and townscape character of the District
5. To conserve and enhance the biodiversity of the District.
6. To conserve and enhance the historical and cultural environment of the District.
7. To maintain a high quality environment in terms of air, soil and water quality
8. To reduce car journeys and promote alternative methods of transport
9. To reduce the risk of flooding
10. To make the most efficient use of land by prioritising brownfield land for development
11. To reduce the amount of waste produced and maximise the re-use and recycling of other materials.
12. To ensure that rates of energy and water consumption are as efficient as possible.
13. To seek to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases, in particular by encouraging the provision and use of renewable energy.
14. To maintain the high and stable economy of the District
15. To seek to enhance areas where there are inequalities in the economy, particularly the rural economy.
16. To maintain and enhance the vitality of Horsham town and village centres

IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT OF OPTIONS AND POLICIES

In order to ensure that the General Development Control policy document is as sustainable as possible, it was necessary to compare a number of different options against the Sustainability Criteria. This included the 'do-nothing' option of not having a policy on a specific subject area. The results of this assessment found that it would be more sustainable to have a policy than do nothing, as this could lead to uncontrolled development in the District which could harm the economy, create social issues and damage the environment.

Once the assessment of the different options had been completed, each policy was then assessed against the sustainability objectives in more detail. This enabled the positive, negative and neutral effects of the different policies to be identified. Following this assessment of each policy, the results were placed in a table which meant that it was possible to identify where policies worked together or where there were areas of conflict. The main findings from this assessment work were as follows:

- The policies protecting the environment and character of the District work together to help protect the wider environment, but they could also jointly combine to limit the overall land which available for development. This is however the broad intention of many of these policies, as the control of development in the District will help to protect its overall character. Furthermore other policies are present, such as those in the Site Specific Allocations of Land document which allocate land to help meet specific housing or employment needs.
- The landscape character and environmental protection policies whilst combining to provide a stronger level of protection to the wider environment of the District are in direct conflict with the rural strategy policies. These policies all have the potential to adversely affect the character and environment of rural areas, whilst combining to protect and enhance the rural economy.
- Most policies combine to have an overall positive effect on the economy of the District. This is achieved by direct measures such as protecting employment sites, but also by protecting the environment which ensures that the District remains a pleasant and attractive area, thereby encouraging people to live and work in the area.
- In some instances it was not possible to draw any conclusions about the likely positive or negative effects on some of the sustainability objectives. For example the effects of the policies on crime and fear of crime are particularly hard to predict, and the overall effect of the policies will therefore need to be closely monitored.

SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS

Once the results of the assessment were known it was possible to decide which effects (both positive and negative) would be the most significant, or in other words have the greatest impact of social, environmental and economic issues. The greatest effects of the policies were found to be as follows:

- The rural strategy policies have the potential to adversely affect the landscape character and environment through a combination of small scale developments and increased transport in these areas. Conversely however, the landscape character and environmental protection policies combine to help provide a strong level of protection to the wider environment of the District.

- The policies will help to increase the number of affordable homes in the District, for example by requiring a greater number of smaller homes to be built.
- The requirement for developments to meet some of their energy needs from renewable sources has the potential to reduce the impact on climate change.
- Ensuring that employment areas remain in villages and towns will help ensure that villages maintain their character and the balance of residential and employment areas.

MITIGATION MEASURES

In order to prevent or minimise the negative effects of the policies that were identified in the sustainability assessment of the General Control Policies document a number of mitigation measures have been suggested and incorporated. The main mitigation measures are as follows:

- Amendment of the wording of policies or additions and clarifications of the supporting text.
- Other policies: Other policies in the General Development Control Policies document help to mitigate the negative effects of others. For example policies on landscape and biodiversity help to protect the character of the District where rural development policies may otherwise harm it. Where relevant cross reference to other policies has been made in the document or a specific issue has been highlighted. The document also emphasises that the DC policies must be read as a whole, rather than viewing individual policies in isolation.
- Supplementary Planning Documents: many of the negative effects arising from the proposals will be given further consideration and mitigated against in other supplementary planning documents. For example it is anticipated that an SPD will be produced providing more information on landscape character.

MONITORING

The findings of this Sustainability Appraisal were taken into account in the preparation of the General Development Control Policies document. The Sustainability Appraisal has been updated following the Inspector's report on the Development Control Policy document and is published alongside it.

To measure the impact of the General Development Control Policy document, including the effects on the sustainable development, the General Development Control Policies will be monitored. The monitoring will be undertaken on an annual basis and will be incorporated into the wider annual monitoring which is required for the Local Development Framework. The findings of this monitoring will help measure how well the plan contributes to sustainable development, and inform future reviews of the plans and policies.