

Huntingdon West Area Action Plan

The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

Sustainability Appraisal Adoption Statement

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Huntingdonshire District Council adopted the Huntingdon West Area Action Plan on 23rd February 2011. In accordance with Regulation 16 (3) and (4) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 the Council has produced this statement that sets out:
- How environmental considerations have been integrated into the Area Action Plan
 - How the environmental report has been taken into account
 - How consultation responses have been taken into account
 - Reasons for choosing the Area Action Plan as adopted in light of other reasonable alternatives dealt with
 - Measures that are to be taken to monitor significant environmental effects of the implementation of the Area Action Plan

2 How environmental considerations have been integrated into the Area Action Plan

- 2.1 An integral part of the process of preparing the Area Action Plan has been to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) to ensure the integration of social, environmental and economic considerations into the development of the Area Action Plan objectives and strategic policies. In undertaking the SA the requirements of European Union Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment and the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 have been incorporated into the SA.
- 2.2 The SA commenced during the pre-production and evidence gathering stage for the Issues and Options. At each stage in the preparation of the Area Action Plan options have been tested against the SA framework to predict and evaluate the effects of the Area Action Plan. A report was published at each stage of the process.

3 How the environmental report has been taken into account

- 3.1 The Final Sustainability Appraisal, submitted alongside the Area Action Plan set out the process which had taken place and summarised how the appraisals to that date had influenced the Area Action Plan. The process involved the following stages:
- Issues and Options 2007 and SA
 - Options 2008 and SA
 - Preferred Approach 2009 and Draft Final SA
 - Habitat Regulations Assessment 2009
 - Proposed Submission 2009 and Final SA
- 3.2 A schedule of Minor Changes was provided at Submission and following the hearings this was added to with Significant Changes. A Supplement to the Final SA was produced to assess the changes to four policies and concluded that the changes were not significant in terms of sustainability.
- 3.3 At each stage, where necessary and appropriate, the approach was developed and modified in line with the findings of the SA to ensure that the chosen policy options were sustainable and/or that environmental impacts as a result of the strategy can be mitigated as far as possible.

4 How consultation responses have been taken into account

- 4.1 Consultation responses on both the Sustainability Appraisals and the documents themselves informed the submitted Area Action Plan and the changes prior to adoption. This is set out in detail in the Council's Statement of Consultation on the Area Action Plan. Although the early stages were mainly setting the overall principles, the Preferred Approach included draft policies and comments led to specific changes. Comments from that point onwards were summarised and Council's response was identified. Many more comments were received on the documents themselves than the accompanying SA. The Final SA includes in Appendix 1 a summary of all 13 representations on the Draft Final SA. There was only one representation on the Final SA which suggested updating some monitoring data.
- 4.2 Consultation was undertaken on changes following the Examination hearings together with the Supplement to the Final SA. No comments were received specifically on the Supplement to the Final SA, although there were comments from 11 organisations concerning the changes. The Council indicated that it was prepared to make further amendments responding to the points raised and these were listed on the Council's website. The Inspector in his report of December 2010 recommended that these changes were made responding to the points made during consultation.

5 Reasons for choosing the Area Action Plan as adopted in light of other reasonable alternatives dealt with

- 5.1 In preparing the Area Action Plan a range of options were put forward, particularly in respect of the key areas for future development. This statement is required to set out the reasons for choosing the plan as adopted in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with.
- 5.2 Each SA considered alternatives. The Final SA noted that at that stage there were few genuine alternatives that had not been considered previously, with most representations suggesting amendments to policies and supporting text.
- 5.3 One key issue concerned road improvements. It was noted in the Final SA that alternative road layouts had been suggested, but that was largely outside of the scope of the AAP. By the time of the hearings, the West of Town Centre Link Road had received planning consent, but the changes to the A14 set out in Draft Orders in 2009 were in doubt and ultimately withdrawn in October 2010. This led to changes to the policy and supporting text which had anticipated these road changes.
- 5.4 Alternatives in the George St / Ermine St area principally concerned the amount and location of retail in this mixed use area. The final policy details the amount by which the retail offer within Huntingdon can be expanded whilst supporting the town centre and appropriate redevelopment of Chequers Court.
- 5.5 An area of private land adjoining Views Common and other land in the Hinchingsbrooke area is allocated for additional employment and institutional activities. Alternative uses, including leaving sites as open space, were considered in the preparation of the plan. The final allocations reflect that these are particularly sustainable locations for such activities. Alternative uses on the hospital site were not allocated due to there being no agreed plan to release any land.
- 5.6 The Area Action Plan has been found sound following examination by an independent Inspector and sets out a sustainable approach for this key development area. The alternative of not adopting the Area Action Plan would result in further uncertainty on the future of this area resulting in missed opportunities for development.

6 Measures that are to be taken to monitor significant environmental effects of the implementation of the Area Action Plan

- 6.1 The Area Action Plan includes a monitoring chapter with indicators and targets. The Annual Monitoring Report will be the main mechanism for assessing the performance of the Area Action Plan. Where, as a result of monitoring, indicators show that a policy is not working or key targets are not being met this remedial action may be taken or it may give rise to a review of the Area Action Plan or other parts of the Local Development Framework.