

Core Strategy Development Plan Document

The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

Sustainability Appraisal Adoption Statement

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Huntingdonshire District Council adopted the Core Strategy Development Plan Document on 23rd September 2009. 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 Core Strategy
 - How the environmental report has been taken into account
 - How consultation responses have been taken into account
 - Reasons for choosing the Core Strategy 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 Core Strategy

2 How environmental considerations have been integrated into the Core Strategy

- 2.1 An integral part of the process of preparing the Core Strategy has been to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal to ensure the integration of social, environmental and economic considerations into the development of the Core Strategy objectives and strategic policies. In undertaking the Sustainability Appraisal the requirements of EU 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 Sustainability Appraisal.
- 2.2 The Sustainability Appraisal commenced during the pre-production and evidence gathering stage, initially using the Scoping Report produced in 2005 and then a revised Scoping Report agreed in October 2007. At each stage in the preparation of the Core Strategy options have been tested against the Sustainability Appraisal framework to predict and evaluate the effects of the Core Strategy, ways of mitigating adverse effects and maximising beneficial effects, and measures proposed to improve the sustainability of options as the Core Strategy evolved. A Sustainability Report was published at each stage culminating in the Final Sustainability Appraisal submitted alongside the Core Strategy.

3 How the environmental report has been taken into account

Issues and Options

- 3.1 The Issues and Options Report presented a number of options and reasonable alternatives on the spatial strategy to be pursued, options for housing, employment and retail growth, how housing could meet local needs and how Huntingdonshire could develop as a clean, green, attractive place. The Initial Sustainability Appraisal tested against a framework of sustainability objectives. Following analysis of representations made during the Issues and Options phase it was decided that an additional stage of public engagement was required focussing solely on the vision, spatial strategy and incorporating an option for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. The Initial Sustainability Appraisal on this indicated a number of aspects which needed to be addressed in the Preferred Options Report, including minimising flood risk and promoting renewable energy. Table 4.6 of the Final SA sets out how the Initial SA influenced the development of the Preferred Options.

Preferred Options

- 3.2 A draft Final Sustainability Appraisal was produced alongside the Preferred Options for the Core Strategy and published for public consultation in November 2007. The potential effects of the preferred options were appraised against the sustainability objectives which provided information on their possible economic, social and environmental impacts. The appraisal considered whether the impact would be expected to be positive, negative, neutral or uncertain. The potential cumulative, synergistic and secondary impacts of the proposed policies on the sustainability objectives were also assessed. Where a potentially negative impact was identified mitigation measures were proposed, including recommendations on how the preferred options could be amended to become more sustainable. Table 4.11 of the Final SA sets out how the draft Final SA influenced the development of the submission Core Strategy.

Submission Draft

- 3.3 A Final Sustainability Appraisal was submitted alongside the Core Strategy in July 2008 with each policy being assessed against the 18 Sustainability Appraisal objectives. A comparison was also undertaken of the social, environmental and economic effects of policies. An evaluation was again completed of the potential cumulative effects that could result from implementation of the policies. A number of policies were reworded between the preferred options and submission stages to reflect the recommendations of the draft Final sustainability Appraisal. The likely future state of the environment in the absence of the Core Strategy was assessed and the conclusion drawn that the policies in the submission draft Core Strategy would be sustainable when taken as a whole package and make a positive contribution to sustainability in the District.

4 How consultation responses have been taken into account

Scoping report

- 4.1 Article 5.4 of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive requires consultation with authorities with environmental responsibilities when deciding the scope and level of detail of the information which must be included in the environmental report (Sustainability Appraisal). The required consultees are the Environment Agency, English Heritage and Natural England; in addition responses were sought from Cambridgeshire Primary Care Trust, Cambridgeshire County Council and the East of England Development Agency to ensure a wider picture of social and economic sustainability as well as environmental sustainability. After the Initial Sustainability Appraisal of the Issues and Options document for the Core Strategy the Scoping Report was reviewed. Details of those consulted at this stage, their comments and the Council's responses are set out in Appendix 7 of the Scoping Report 2007. The consultation resulted in a number of changes to the Scoping Report; the most significant of which included addition of an indicator concerning the Gypsy and Traveller community and increased emphasis on incorporating means of promoting healthy lifestyles.

Issues and Options Consultation

- 4.2 The Initial Sustainability Appraisal was published for consultation alongside the Core Strategy Issues and Options during May – July 2007. Five responses were received with details given in Table 4.3 of the Final SA. Consultation responses on the Issues and Options Report gave rise to publication of a further stage of options consultation in the form of Towards a Spatial Strategy for Huntingdonshire.

Preferred Options Consultation

- 4.3 The draft Final Sustainability Appraisal report was published for consultation alongside the Preferred Options from November 2007 – January 2008. Consultation responses were received from five organisations these are summarised in Table 4.5 of the Final SA together with the Council's responses setting out how the issues raised are addressed in the Core Strategy.

Submission Consultation

- 4.4 The Final Sustainability Appraisal was published alongside the submission Core Strategy for consultation in July – August 2008. Comments on the Final SA were received from just three

organisations. These were submitted to the Inspector for his consideration during the examination into the soundness of the Core Strategy.

5 Reasons for choosing the Core Strategy as adopted in light of other reasonable alternatives dealt with

- 5.1 In preparing the Core Strategy a range of options were put forward which form different approaches to addressing the key planning issues facing Huntingdonshire. 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. A number of alternative approaches were set out in both the Issues and Options document and in Towards a Spatial Strategy for Huntingdonshire. Appendix 4 of the draft Final SA sets out detailed consideration of the reasonable alternatives considered in the Issues and Options document. This is complemented by the Sustainability Appraisal completed for Towards a Spatial Strategy for Huntingdonshire which focussed strongly on consideration of four possible growth scenarios up to 2026 with three more scenarios considering options for additional growth going beyond the plan period. The Sustainability Appraisal clearly indicated that a spatial strategy focussed on growth at Huntingdon or St Neots was the most sustainable compared to alternatives where growth was either spread across the Cambridge sub-region or dispersed throughout the Market Towns and Key Service Centres. The preferred option drew from two of the four main alternatives put forward initially. The economic, social and environmental effects of the preferred and submission versions were appraised and generally performed well. Mitigation measures have been identified in some instances that will influence policies in the Development Management DPD. The Core Strategy, as adopted, has been found sound following examination by an independent Inspector and represents a sustainable approach to key planning issues in the District.

6 Measures that are to be taken to monitor significant environmental effects of the implementation of the Core Strategy

- 6.1 Table 6.2 of the Core Strategy contains a series of performance indicators and targets. It identifies the Spatial and Sustainability Appraisal objectives which relate to the particular indicator to identify the significant effects of policy implementation, how implementation is anticipated and the responsible agencies for doing so. The Annual Monitoring Report will be the main mechanism for assessing the performance of the Core Strategy. 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 Core Strategy or other parts of the Local Development Framework.