

# **Oadby and Wigston Borough Council – Local Development Framework**

## **Core Strategy Development Plan Document**

### **Sustainability Appraisal**

#### **Adoption Statement**

##### **Introduction**

Oadby and Wigston Borough Council resolved to adopt the Core Strategy Development Plan Document at its Full Council meeting on 28 September 2010.

This Sustainability Appraisal Adoption Statement has been prepared in accordance with Section 16 (3) and (4) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 which requires local planning authorities to demonstrate:

- how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme;
- how the environmental report has been taken into account;
- how opinions expressed and results of public consultation have been taken into account;
- how the results of any consultations entered into under regulation 14 (4) have been taken into account;
- the reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and
- the measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan or programme.

The Core Strategy will form part of the Oadby and Wigston Local Development Framework and will replace relevant parts of the existing Oadby and Wigston Local Plan 1999 (as amended 2004). The Core Strategy is the principal document of the Local Development Framework and has the key role of setting the vision, spatial strategy and core policies for development in the Borough for the period up to 2026. The Core Strategy is the first Development Plan Document to be adopted by the Council and all subsequent documents in the Local Development Framework must be consistent with it.

The Core Strategy was considered by an independent Planning Inspector at an Examination in Public between 27 April and 7 May 2010. The Inspector's Report was published on the Council's website on 20 August 2010.

##### **How does the Sustainability Appraisal relate to the Core Strategy?**

In accordance with Section 19 (5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, local planning authorities are required to carry out an appraisal of the sustainability of the proposals contained in plans and programmes such as a development plan document and prepare a report setting out these findings. Government guidance contained in Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents (November 2005) also clarifies that in accordance with the Environmental Assessment Regulations for Plans and Programmes (July 2004), a Sustainability Appraisal should incorporate Strategic Environmental Assessment as required by Article 13.3 of the European Directive

2001/42/EC (SEA Directive). The Sustainability Appraisal highlights where the requirements of the SEA Directive have been met.

A Sustainability Appraisal is an appraisal of the economic, environmental and social effects of a plan from the outset of the preparation process to allow decisions to be made that accord with sustainable development. Therefore, the Sustainability Appraisal was used to evaluate the various reasonable policy alternatives and consider the likely implications for sustainable development of the Core Strategy throughout its preparation.

The SEA Directive requires local planning authorities to carry out formal Strategic Environmental Assessment of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment. The Strategic Environmental Assessment process ensures that opportunities for public involvement are provided and the significant environmental effects arising from policies, plans and programmes are predicted, evaluated, mitigated and monitored.

### **How the Sustainability Appraisal considerations have been integrated into the Core Strategy**

The Sustainability Appraisal for Oadby and Wigston Core Strategy has been an iterative process carried out for each key stage of the document, including issues and options, preferred options and submission stages.

The Sustainability Appraisal commenced during the pre-production and evidence gathering stage. In June 2005 a Sustainability Appraisal Framework was developed on behalf of the Borough Council by consultants White Young Green Environmental. The development of the Sustainability Appraisal Framework resulted in the production of a Scoping Report which detailed the outcome of:

- consultation on the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal;
- a review of other relevant plans and programmes;
- collection of social, economic and environmental baseline data;
- identification of the current social, economic and environmental situation in the Borough;
- identification of key sustainability issues; and
- development of Sustainability Appraisal objectives.

The draft Scoping Report was issued to selected environmental bodies including English Heritage and the Environment Agency and to the Government Office for the East Midlands for consultation. The Scoping Report included a compatibility assessment of the then proposed Core Strategy Objectives against the Sustainability Appraisal Objectives.

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 in terms 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.

### **How the Sustainability Appraisal has been taken into account at each stage of Core Strategy preparation.**

#### **Issues and Options**

The Issues and Options document presented a number of options and reasonable alternatives on the spatial strategy to be pursued, including options for housing

delivery, employment growth, town centres and regeneration and meeting the different housing needs of local people. The Issues and Options document was appraised using the Sustainability Appraisal objectives developed during the initial stage of Sustainability Appraisal production and were contained in the Scoping Report. Also, account was taken in relation to the comments raised in response to the Scoping Report. The results of the assessment were illustrated through the Issues and Options Appraisal Matrices.

The Issues and Options Appraisal enabled the social, economic and environmental acceptability of potential options for development to be ascertained. The Sustainability Appraisal of the Issues and Options identified a number of potential effects associated with the various options proposed, both positive and negative. The Issues and Options appraisal was a tool for decision making. No priority was given to social, economic or environmental factors and as such the role of the Issues and Options appraisal was to highlight sustainability implications rather than recommending appropriate options for implementation.

The options with the most positive and least negative sustainability impacts were recommended to plan-makers, and without exception these were taken forward as policy approaches in the Preferred Options document.

### **Preferred Options**

A second stage (Stage B) Sustainability Appraisal was produced alongside the Preferred Options for the Core Strategy and published for public consultation between April and June 2006. The Preferred Options draft of the Core Strategy set out the Borough Council's preferred approach regarding future development in the Borough and included a number of potential policies to help deliver this approach. The potential effects of the preferred options were appraised against the Sustainability Appraisal Framework 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. Where a potentially negative impact was identified mitigation measures were proposed. An appraisal matrix was produced for each potential policy contained within the Preferred Options Core Strategy. As a result of the analysis of appraisal matrices and representations received, it was decided that an additional stage of public engagement was required; focussing on broad locations for development growth adjacent to the urban area (i.e. requiring the release of greenfield land) and the range of choices for meeting all types of future development needs to compliment growth.

### **Supplemental Issues and Options**

As a result of the previous appraisal matrices, responses to the Preferred Options document and advice from Government Office for the East Midlands highlighted a need to investigate further the Borough Council's approach to the meeting of development needs and its location. A Supplemental Issues and Options document was prepared to seek views in relation to five broad locations for development adjacent to the urban area and the options for meeting these needs i.e. a mix of greenfield and brownfield land or a free standing settlement. Again the potential effects of the options were appraised against the Sustainability Appraisal Framework.

Following analysis of the appraisal matrices, the choice and broad location with the most positive and least negative sustainability impact was taken forward as policy approaches to be included in a further Preferred Options document.

### **Further Preferred Options**

The Sustainability Appraisal of the Core Strategy options (both Preferred Options consultations) identified a number of potential effects, both beneficial and detrimental. The effects of the options were analysed according to the Sustainability Appraisal Framework to provide information on the impacts in the short, medium and long term. As before, these were presented in the form of matrices. Measures to limit and mitigate against environmental, social and economic impacts of the Core Strategy were identified where possible.

The compatibility and options appraisal matrices can be found in Appendices C and D of the final Sustainability Appraisal. An Appraisal Table was produced for each of the proposed policies, detailing the social, economic and environmental effects of that particular policy. The predicted effects of the Core Strategy policies are detailed in the Appraisal Tables in Appendix E.

The results of the Sustainability Appraisal assessment matrices, allowed for proposed policies and options to be modified at various stages in their development. For example, proposed Direction for Growth Option B (adjacent to the urban area south east of Wigston) scored best in terms of the Sustainability Appraisal assessment matrices.

### **Publication/Submission Draft**

A final Sustainability Appraisal was submitted alongside the Core Strategy in January 2010 with each policy being assessed against the 22 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 publication/submission stages to reflect the recommendations of the draft Final Sustainability Appraisal and consultation responses received from the Further Preferred Options consultation. 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 Borough.

### **The Sustainability Appraisal consultation process.**

#### **Scoping report**

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 (which incorporates the now defunct Countryside Agency). A questionnaire was used to gather responses. In addition, responses to the questionnaire were also sought from a range of other consultees such as South Leicestershire Primary Care Trust, Leicestershire County Council, Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust and Leicestershire Development Agency to ensure a wider picture of social and economic sustainability as well as environmental sustainability. To compliment the questionnaire survey a consultation forum was organised jointly with Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council and Blaby District Council. The forum consisted of a series of presentations on the Sustainability Appraisal process and workshops to discuss the Sustainability Appraisal objectives in the afternoon.

Details of those consulted at this stage, their comments and the Council's responses are set out in Appendices B and C of the Scoping Report 2005. The outcomes of the questionnaire and forum consultation were used in the identification of key sustainability issues and in the development of objectives, targets and indicators.

### **Draft Sustainability Appraisal**

The draft Sustainability Appraisal report and associated technical Appendices was issued for consultation at each stage of Core Strategy production (i.e. Issues and Options, Preferred Options, Supplemental Issues and Options and Further Preferred Options) to those statutory bodies with responsibility for environmental issues as well as to other appropriate consultees with an interest in social and economic issues. Furthermore, in line with Regulation 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008 and Oadby and Wigston Statement of Community Involvement, copies of the draft Sustainability Appraisal report were sent to those participants who had requested each public participation Core Strategy document.

### **Publication Consultation**

The Final Sustainability Appraisal was published alongside the publication Core Strategy for consultation in October 2009. This was the key output of the Sustainability Appraisal process as it presented the evolution of the Sustainability Appraisal and illustrated how its findings informed the development of the Core Strategy. The report also encompassed the requirements of the SEA Directive. Therefore, the Sustainability Appraisal was a key tenet of the evidence base underpinning the Core Strategy and was used to assess the 'soundness' of the plan during Examination.

### **Next steps**

The Sustainability Appraisal is an iterative process. The success and effectiveness of the Core Strategy will need to be monitored to ensure any unforeseen adverse effects are identified and acted upon. The final Sustainability Appraisal suggests a range of targets and indicators to enable appropriate monitoring of the Core Strategy. The suggested targets and indicators are designed to be used as guidance only as depending on how they are implemented they may require some future refinement.

Information on monitoring and implementation of the Core Strategy Development Plan Document will be contained within the Annual Monitoring Report.