

Plymouth City Council

Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document

The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

Environmental Statement

Introduction

1. Plymouth City Council adopted its Core Strategy Development Plan Document on 24th April 2007. As part of the adoption procedures under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, Regulation 16 (3) and (4) requires a Statement to be produced on the adoption of any plan or programme to which the regulations apply. The regulations specify that the Statement should explain how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme; how the environmental report has been taken into account; how public consultation responses have been taken into account; why the plan or programme has been adopted rather than the other options considered; and finally, how the significant environmental effects of implementing the plan or programme will be monitored.

Key Environmental Bodies

2. Throughout the process of carrying out a Sustainability Appraisal of the Core Strategy, three key bodies are required to be consulted – the Environment Agency, English Heritage and Natural England (formerly English Nature and the Countryside Agency). During the Sustainability Appraisal, comments from these bodies in particular have shaped the Appraisal and have been fed into the assessment of Issues and Options, Preferred Options, Preferred Options Key Changes, and the formulation of the Core Strategy up to and including submission.

Integrating Environmental Considerations into the Core Strategy

3. In the course of its preparation, the Plymouth Core Strategy has been subject to a five-stage independent Sustainability Appraisal by Land Use Consultants. The appraisal began with a Scoping Report in November 2004 (revised March 2005) following new statutory requirements, including the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Preliminary Sustainability Appraisals were then undertaken for all of the Core Strategy Issues and Options documents, followed by

Appraisal of the Preferred Options in July 2005, Preferred Options Key Changes in April 2006, and finally the Submission Draft in July 2006. At all times the Sustainability Appraisal was carried out in accordance with the requirements of Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appraisal set out in European and UK legislation.

Taking the Environmental Report into Account

Issues and Options

4. At the Issues and Options stage, many options were considered in addressing the future spatial planning of the City. The key Issues and options were outlined in the consultation documents, and these were subject to Sustainability Appraisal. The Sustainability Appraisal concluded that the options were appropriate alternatives in the context of Plymouth. The Sustainability Appraisal also confirmed that none of the other alternatives offered significant benefits over the Preferred Options.

Preferred Options

5. Comprehensive consideration by the Council of the Issues and Options, including responses from stakeholders and the wider community consultation, led to the formulation and publication of Preferred Options. Sustainability Appraisal of the Preferred Options confirmed the appropriateness of the Spatial Strategy for Plymouth in meeting the range of sustainability objectives. Tensions were identified between SEA/SA objectives when trying to provide sufficient land and infrastructure for necessary future development within the tight confines of the City. However these concerns could be overcome. The Council produced a Schedule of Responses and made appropriate adjustments to the emerging strategy in response to the issues raised in the Preferred Options SEA/SA.

Preferred Options Key Changes

6. Plymouth City Council used the new spatial planning system in a creative way to enhance the quality of its plans as an on-going process. A number of issues were raised by the public and commercial interests in response to the July 2005 Preferred Options consultations and this prompted the City Council to consider whether further changes were necessary to its spatial planning policies. An extra consultation stage was therefore carried out in April 2006, and the Key Changes document subject to SEA/SA. This concluded that the changes made strengthened the overall sustainability of the Core Strategy.

Submission Draft

7. The Sustainability Appraisal of the Submission Draft summed up the comments that have been made throughout the SEA/SA process on the sustainability and potential social, environmental and economic impacts that could result from the strategies, plans, objectives, policies, targets and proposals contained in the Submission Draft of the Core Strategy. The Appraisal noted that the overall sustainability of the proposals had been enhanced by the close collaboration of officers at Plymouth City Council and Land Use Consultants. Tensions inevitably remained between some competing objectives of the strategy and so the Draft SEA/SA report still contained a number of cautionary remarks and recommendations. However it was also noted that the most important stage of delivering the vision for Plymouth was only just beginning – that of implementation.

Monitoring of the Sustainability Appraisal and Core Strategy

8. The Local Development Framework for Plymouth is to be kept under continuous review. In order for this to happen, an Annual Monitoring Report is required to be submitted to Government Office. The Annual Monitoring Report makes provision for monitoring the sustainability of the Plymouth Core Strategy as it is implemented during the period of the Local Development Framework up to 2021. The Sustainability Appraisal includes a framework for monitoring a number of key effects of the Local Development Framework including: development in flood risk areas; Over-pricing of property in district centres and desirable locations like the waterside which could price out existing local residents (see Section 4 of the Submission Draft SEA/SA Report).

Core Strategy – Public Examination of the Sustainability Appraisal

9. The Council's Sustainability Appraisal was subject to Soundness Test 3 by a Planning Inspector who undertook a public examination of the Core Strategy including the Sustainability Appraisal. The Inspector concluded that each stage of the Core Strategy's preparation has had a sustainability appraisal, and the submitted Core Strategy has been subject to a satisfactory Strategic Environmental Assessment. The Inspector also noted that the Council had completed a Habitats Regulations Assessment to determine whether policies and proposals in the Core Strategy will have significant adverse impacts on nearby Natura 2000 sites. It concluded that some policies and proposals would have an adverse effect unless mitigation measures were included. The Inspector was satisfied that the policies and proposals, subject to minor changes in Appendix B to the Inspector's Report, would allow for

mitigation of any significant adverse impacts, and that no further changes are needed to make the Core Strategy sound in this regard. The Inspector therefore concluded that the Plan and its policies had been properly subjected to Sustainability Appraisal and Soundness Test 3 on Sustainability Appraisal had been met.

10. Further information on the Sustainability Appraisal is available in the Sustainability Appraisal documentation including the final Sustainability Appraisal Report.

Public Consultation

11. The Core Strategy has been prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004, which require that a Development Plan Document is accompanied by a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). Plymouth's SCI was adopted in July 2006 and the Core Strategy meets all of its requirements. The Core Strategy has been through three major stages of consultation – Issues and Options in March/April 2005, Preferred Options in July/September 2005, and Preferred Options Key Changes in April/May 2006. A full statement of the Council's pre-submission consultation on the Core Strategy (Regulation 28 Statement, dated August 2006) is available from the Council. Consultation took a variety of forms including: an LDF launch event in February 2004; public reports and associated questionnaires; public exhibitions; presentations to Area Committee meetings; a DVD 'An Invitation to Aspire'; advertisements in the 'Evening Herald' local newspaper; consultation events; focus groups; articles in community newsletters. Documents were available in paper form at the main Council offices, local libraries and Council housing offices. They were also available on the Council website.
12. The Council has considered all the representations received. The Preferred Options, Key Changes and Submission stage representations were summarised individually and responded to in Schedules of Representations.

Links to Core Strategy Documents

Issues and Options:

<http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/homepage/environmentandplanning/planning/planningpolicy/ldf/ldfcorestrategy/csissuesandoptions.htm>

Sustainability Appraisal of Issues and Options:

<http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/homepage/environmentandplanning/planning/planningpolicy/ldf/ldfsustainabilityappraisals/saissuesandoptions.htm>

Preferred Options:

<http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/homepage/environmentandplanning/planning/planningpolicy/ldf/ldfcorestrategy/cspreferredoptions.htm>

Sustainability Appraisal of Preferred Options:

http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/core_strategy_preferred_options_sea_report_read_only.pdf

Preferred Options Key Changes:

<http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/homepage/environmentandplanning/planning/planningpolicy/ldf/ldfcorestrategy/cskeychanges.htm>

Sustainability Appraisal of Preferred Options Key Changes:

http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/sea_sa_of_the_core_strategy_key_changes.pdf

Submitted:

<http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/homepage/environmentandplanning/planning/planningpolicy/ldf/ldfcorestrategy/corestrategysubmitted.htm>

Sustainability Appraisal of Submission Draft:

http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/environmental_report_of_core_strategy_submission.pdf

Regulation 28 Statement:

[http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/consultation_under_regulation_28_\(regulation_28_c_information\)ali-2.pdf](http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/consultation_under_regulation_28_(regulation_28_c_information)ali-2.pdf)