1. Plymouth's Waste DPD - Submission Stage SEA/SA Summary

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1 Plymouth's Waste DPD - Submission Stage SEA/SA Summary

Introduction

1.1 Planning Authorities are required to produce a Sustainability Appraisal (SA), alongside plans that form part of a Local Development Framework (LDF). The Waste Development Plan Document is such a plan.

1.2 Sustainability Appraisal uses a range of sustainability objectives and indicators to test whether the plans, policies and proposals are the best possible ones for delivering sustainable development. SA can be viewed as a yardstick against which the social, environmental and economic effects of the plan(s) can be tested. In the case of the waste plan the appraisal was used to help generate options and alternatives that could be more sustainable, and to improve the sustainability of policies and proposals included in the plan.

1.3 There were 3 key stages to the preparation of the Waste DPD, and these comply with Government guidance contained within Planning Policy Statement 12:

- Issues and Options (March 2005)
- Preferred Options (July 2005)
- Submission (August 2007)

1.4 Each of these stages has been subject to a Sustainability Appraisal. All of these appraisals have been undertaken using an appraisal framework developed and set out in the SEA/SA Context and Baseline report, which was developed during 2005 and published in July of that year. The appraisals were undertaken prior to publication at each stage, to enable any recommendations to be incorporated in the published versions. This Non-technical Summary outlines the key sustainability findings associated with each of these stages and demonstrates how the Appraisal contributed to the development of the plan.

Issues & Options

The Issues and Options document outlined the Waste issues facing the city:

- the role that could be played by waste minimisation and reuse
- how the city could meet recycling and recovery targets and where such facilities might be located
- the possible locations for new landfill facilities
- to what extent the city could comply with the proximity principle, ie that the city’s waste should be managed as close to production as possible
- how Plymouth could deal with its waste in the short-term - between the closure of the current landfill site and the establishment of new landfill /recovery facilities.

1.5 It set out the various options to achieve each of these and put forward a series of potential sites for longer-term waste management facilities. These were at:

- Chelson Meadow
- Shale Quarry, Plymstock
In relation to this Issues and Options document, the SA said:

The issue of waste emerges as one of the most pressing areas of concern. Plymouth is rapidly running out of space to landfill domestic waste and greater urgency needs to be given to the reduction of the amount of waste arising - and to recycling and reuse, as well as working out a longer term strategy for the disposal of unavoidable residual wastes.

The SA also expressed concern over the possible increase in fly-tipping and illegal dumping associated with the reduction in facilities for the disposal of waste. It recommended a "clean" approach to recycling, to reduce possible contamination. It also suggested that careful consideration be given to the possible impact on the environment and the quality of life of those living close to new waste sites. Finally it suggested that opportunities for the transport of waste, other than by road, be explored.

Preferred Options

In July 2005, the Council produced its Preferred Options version of the Waste DPD. The preferred strategy identified the need for additional recycling and composting infrastructure in the short term, together with the maximisation of opportunities for waste treatment within the city in the long term. A series of policies established a framework for the consideration of waste proposals, and potential waste management sites were identified at:

- Coypool
- Chelson Meadow
- Prince Rock
- Moorcroft Quarry
- Ernesettle, if other sites cannot be brought forward for development

As part of the production of this document a second and more detailed SA was carried out to examine the various options being pursued.

The SA acknowledged that there was clear evidence in the waste plan that the City Council was embarking on a number of positive policies to bring waste management under effective control. It did sound a note of caution, however, over short term options for managing Plymouth’s waste, which involved transferring waste to other areas. As this was inevitable, due to the lead-in times required for new facilities, the Preferred Options document made allowance for additional recycling and composting capacity in the short term.

The SA also commented:

A series of strategic options have been presented, representing a continuum from the present restricted approach to waste minimisation and recovery through enhanced treatment to avoidance of waste, through positive recycling. Success in developing these strategies will depend upon...
several key factors. Firstly, the City Council will need to invest heavily and promote waste management on sites that may prove to be locally contentious. Secondly, it will need to persuade the communities, commercial and business interests to take waste management and waste minimisation seriously. In this respect, Plymouth is not alone since the problem of inadequate public awareness is commonplace. Nevertheless, if Plymouth is to achieve its aspirations and vision, it is essential that waste management is given very high priority.

1.14 The SA confirmed the direction of the strategy, stating that:

- ‘business as usual’ was not an option,
- enhanced and preferably maximised treatment facilities were necessary
- waste is a resource as well as a challenge
- minimisation at source was a priority to the delivery of the strategy

1.15 It strongly endorsed the emerging Policies of the Preferred Options document. It identified the critical issues as being: concerns about the impact of transport movements associated with the movement of waste, the need to rigorously pursue and implement the policies on the ground, and the need to carefully balance competing interests when making decisions.

1.16 In terms of specific sites it noted:

- Coypool – was favourably located, providing water, air and noise pollution were minimised
- Chelson Meadow – it was logical to continue its use as a residual facility, subject to the longer-term rehabilitation of the site
- Prince Rock – had issues concerning the proximity of other land uses and the consequent need for high quality site management and hygiene
- Moorcroft Quarry – was well located and well concealed
- Ernesettle Lane – was visible from the adjacent AONB and had potentially negative impacts on biodiversity, landscape, use of land resources, local distinctiveness and alternative leisure uses.

1.17 These comments were reflected in the final text of the Preferred Options document.

Submission

1.18 In July 2007 a draft Submission version of the Waste DPD was subject to a third Sustainability Appraisal. The development of the submission version of the plan followed adoption of the Plymouth Municipal Waste Management Strategy, which itself was subject to sustainability appraisal.
1.19 The submission version of the plan builds on the Preferred Options version and is based around the strategic objectives identified in the adopted Core Strategy (which was also subject to SA at both preferred options and submission stages). The waste plan supports the overall aim of achieving a major step-change in the way the city's waste is managed. It does this by identifying the locations where waste management facilities should be provided, and establishing a framework for considering waste management proposals.

1.20 Sites at Coypool and Ernesettle are identified as being suitable for a range of strategic waste management facilities. Moorcroft Quarry is identified as suitable for recycling, construction and demolition wastes and the Waste Management Centre at Chelson Meadow is identified as a location for new or extended waste management facilities. Recycling centres are proposed for the northern area of the city, and at Weston Mill (extension of the existing Civic Amenity site). A framework for managing development contains policies relating to unallocated sites, a consideration of all waste management proposals, and an approach to other proposals that might affect a waste management site.

1.21 The SA of the plan concluded:

- The recognition by the Council of the need for a clear vision and the establishment of a robust plan was welcomed.
- The overall philosophy of waste reduction, recycling and re-use (especially of building materials) was strongly supported.
- A hierarchy of waste management and waste transfer facilities was established – maximising the locational effectiveness of the sites, whilst minimising their environmental and social impacts.

1.22 Of the primary waste management sites discussed during the process:

- Coypool - was endorsed, subject to safeguarding and mitigating measures raised by the SA. The area proposed for the facility was reduced, in part to manage the environmental and traffic impacts.
- Ernesettle Lane - was accepted, albeit with the acknowledgement that the site would represent a significant challenge. A series of caveats raised by the SA, to reduce the visual impact and the protect the social, commercial and military amenity of the location were taken on board. Part of the original area, closest to existing houses, was excluded from the proposal.
- Moorcroft Quarry – was allocated, again on a reduced footprint from that shown in the Preferred Options document, subject to its availability in the longer term. However, the SA noted the need to manage noise, dust and water pollution, and this was incorporated into the site constraints in the Submitted Version.
- Chelson Meadow – continuing use was approved as part of the mix of facilities, again subject to the need for mitigating measures and civic amenity protection raised in the SA.
Prince Rock - was discounted, in part following concerns raised by the SA.

1.23 Smaller scale sites at Weston Mill and at an unidentified site in the Northern Area were supported, subject to strict environmental guidelines and the consideration of waste transport implications.

1.24 The SA supported the redrafting of Policies, originally set out in the Preferred Options document, relating to:

- Unallocated sites
- Consideration of other sites
- Applications affecting existing, proposed or allocated sites.

1.25 In recognition of the concerns that exist relating to potential health and waste issues, the SA draws upon work completed by the Plymouth Health Development Unit which concludes....

Firstly it seems appropriate to observe that there should be greater long-term public health benefits for the local population if the production of waste is reduced.

In terms of the new Waste management facilities being proposed, ie energy from waste through incineration, then, on balance, the evidence from the Health Protection Agency

In terms of the proposed locations for new waste facilities, the Waste DPD itself observes that ‘there are significant concerns from local residents regarding the potential impacts of waste management facility development... particularly in relation to transport, health and amenity’. Public concern about the health impacts of incineration has also been expressed in other communities across England (eg Exeter, Westbury).

If major new waste facilities are located in a neighbourhood experiencing health inequalities, then there may be a risk that a perceived and/or measurable decline in local environmental ‘amenity’ may negatively affect well-being and inequalities in such areas.

Conclusions

1.26 In summary, over the course of preparation of the waste plan, the Sustainability Appraisal has helped to:

- improve the overall strategy, enhancing the emphasis on waste minimisation, and the need for additional recycling, composting and treatment facilities

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1 Background information relevant to the prospective health impacts of the Plymouth Waste Development Plan Document (June 2007) Public Health Development Unit (PHDU) Plymouth Teaching Primary Care Trust

2 suggests it is not harmful to physical health. Nor, based on the available information, does there seem to be evidence that a new incineration plant in Plymouth will cause significant prospective harm to general well-being.
• refine the list of proposed sites and the area that they cover, taking into account impacts on the environment and the quality of life
• improve the lists of criteria to be taken into account when considering proposals on the allocated sites
• heighten the emphasis on transport impacts - and the need for alternatives to road transport
• enhance the development management policies
• develop a partnership with Plymouth Health Development Unit to assist with the appraisal of health risks, and to clarify the nature of those risks