

SEA/SA
of
Preferred Options for
North Plymouth Area
Action Plan
Non Technical Summary

Prepared for
Plymouth City Council

by

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I. NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Introduction

- I.1. This report constitutes the non technical summary of the SEA/SA of the **Preferred Options North Plymstock Area Action Plan**. It provides a brief overview of the key issues, options and conclusions. Detailed findings are included in the relevant SEA/SA report.
- I.2. The Non Technical Summary has been prepared in accordance with advice¹ on Sustainability Appraisal (SA) provided by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and procedures for SA set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The Non Technical Summary also accords with the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive².
- I.3. The SA/SEAs are being submitted alongside the Preferred Options documents to provide the public and statutory consultees with the opportunity to express opinions on both sets of documents. After a period of consultation the full set of documents including DPDs and the SA/SEAs will be revised before they are submitted to the Secretary of State. An examination will then be held before an independent inspector to consider the soundness of the plans. It is anticipated that the Inspector's report will be published in mid- 2006 and the final Development Plan Documents will be adopted shortly after.

SA/SEA Stages

- I.4. ODPM's guidance specifies a number of stages of work which need to be undertaken. The following three stages have been completed:

Stage A: Setting context and scope

Stage B: Developing and refining options

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- I.5. The scoping stage gathered information about other relevant plans, programmes, Plymouth's characteristics and SA objectives and indicators. This work built on government policy for sustainable development, and work on sustainability objectives at regional and local level. The sustainability objectives used in the SEA/SA are presented in **Table I**.
- I.6. Appraisal of Issues and Options followed in the spring 2005 and resulted in an analysis of the sustainability strengths and weaknesses of the Core Strategy and each of the Area Action Plans (AAPs). These findings were published.

¹ Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks, Consultation Paper, ODPM, September 2003

² European Directive 2001/42/EC

Table 1: Revised Headline SA/SEA Objectives	
1	Biodiversity and landscape - are properly valued, conserved and enhanced
2	Pollution - is limited to levels which do not damage natural systems
3	Climate change – emissions contributing to climate change are reduced and adaptation measures are in place
4	Resources – Demands on natural resources are managed so that they are used as efficiently as possible
5	Energy – Efficiency use of energy
6	Waste – Waste is minimised and wherever possible eliminated
7	Economy – A diverse and thriving economy
8	Work and Incomes - Everyone has access to satisfying and fairly paid work and unpaid work is valued
9	Local Needs - Wherever possible, local needs are met locally to support local economies
10	Health and well being - Promoting everyone’s physical and mental wellbeing
11	Learning – Everyone has access to lifelong learning, training opportunities, skills and knowledge
12	Safety – Everyone is able to live without fear of crime or persecution
13	Distinctiveness and Cultural Heritage – Diversity and local distinctiveness and cultural heritage are valued, protected and celebrated
14	Leisure – Opportunities for culture, leisure and recreation are provided widely
15	Transport and Access – Offering inclusive access to all service, including access for those without a car
16	Basic Needs, Equality and Diversity – Ensuring community cohesion, tolerance, understanding and equality of opportunity
17	Democracy – All sections of the community are empowered to participate in decision making

1.7. The potential social, economic and environmental effects of the preferred options for the Core Strategy and AAPs have been assessed against the SEA/SA objectives in the current reports. Potential mitigation measures have been proposed as well as measures for maximising beneficial effects. Proposals for future monitoring of the sustainability effects of the LDF are also included.

Stage D: Consulting on the Plan and the SEA/SA Report

1.10. Publication of this Non Technical Summary and the accompanying documents (which are listed below) marks the start of the formal consultation on the Plans and SEA/SA reports:

- The Core Strategy
- Devonport Area Action Plan
- Millbay/Stonehouse Area Action Plan
- North Plymstock Area Action Plan
- Waste Local Development Framework

These reports constitute the 'environmental report' under the SEA Directive.

Characterisation of Plymouth

- 1.8. The environmental baseline is described in detail in the individual SEA/SA reports. Plymouth is surrounded by landscape of national importance, including the Tamar Valley and South Devon AONBs and overlooked by Dartmoor National Park to the north. There is a wealth of nature conservation sites, designated for their biological or geological importance in and around the City. Sites include Plymouth Sound and Estuaries which are candidate Special Areas of Conservation, the Tamar Estuaries Complex, defined as a Special Protection Area as well as several SSSIs. Plymouth is extremely important in terms of its history and archaeological heritage, particularly its naval presence. The City suffered from the devastation of the World War Two resulting in radical and visionary post war plans to reclaim sites and reduce overcrowding. Plans for sub urban areas included the creation of open spaces through valleys with residential areas along the hillsides which are topped by industrial development, playing fields and schools. These changes have resulted in very distinctive areas ranging from the business sector and waterfront to outer suburbs of North Plymstock, Ernesettle and Mutley.
- 1.9. Plymouth has experienced waves of development; the defence sector which has traditionally been seen as an important source of employment and income alongside the manufacturing has declined, whilst the transport, communications and financial sectors have grown. There is a clear intension to revitalise the economy, promote economic activity, improve income levels and quality/availability of employment and establish an attractive city within which to live by concentrating on knowledge intensive sectors.
- 1.10. A relatively high proportion of Plymouth residents experience deprivation in terms of income, employment, access to services and health. Some measures of educational achievement in school and vocational qualifications are low. This may be associated with an outflow of younger people and the limited availability of jobs for highly qualified people.
- 1.11. Proposals for population growth, in line with the Mackay vision present major sustainability challenges ranging from the need to develop the economy and accommodate high levels of population, to providing the necessary infrastructure to meet increasing demands and improve quality of life whilst protecting the environment from increasing development pressure.

Summary of Findings

Appraisal of Issues and Options (Stage B)

- 1.12. The Issues and Options Paper relating to North Plymstock prepared by the Council was reviewed against the SA. A summary of the findings is outlined below.
- 1.13. North Plymstock Area Action Plan appears broadly sustainable although, inevitably, some conflict of interest may arise and these issues are raised through the following questions:
- Achieving sustainable urban communities through the redevelopment of Plymstock Quarry is a positive approach to future planning. However in the design it is important that housing stock and types meets the needs of the local community, are affordable and that the design of buildings is sensitive to the surrounding built and natural environment and reflects/retains locally distinctive features.
 - It is important to ensure that all new development proposals consider opportunities to source materials locally and through sustainable design, reduce energy and waste consumption.
 - Proposals to redevelop on land adjacent to Moorcroft quarry and development adjacent to the existing waste management area (south west of Chelson Meadow) must consider the proximity of proposed development adjacent to quarry and potential impacts on the new community's quality of life e.g. noise from blasting and dust from air pollution.
 - Any proposals resulting in the loss of Billacombe Green common land must consider the nature conservation importance of the land lost to development.
 - Careful consideration should be given to cliff stabilisation and safety issues associated with site seclusion.
 - Design proposals must consider the future management of the site and explore for example opportunities to compost and reuse grey water.
 - Care needs to be taken to enhance the image of the waterfront position at Breakwater Employment Centre and ensure waterfront access by all is retained where possible.
 - It is important in promoting employment growth that a wide variety of opportunities are available and the needs of the local community are met. Green travel plans should be considered alongside development proposals.

Findings of the Preferred Option (Stage C)

- 1.14. North Plymstock Area Action Plan generally strives to meet the range of sustainability objectives identified during the SA/SEA. However, there are some tensions and the findings and conclusions are summarised below.
- 1.15. Like other Area Action Plans, North Plymstock will be reliant on future investment, land negotiations and compulsory purchase orders. Care needs to be taken to

- ensure that throughout the phasing of development adequate facilities and services are available to meet the needs of the new community.
- 1.16. Apart from seeking to reduce energy consumption, proposals could do more to adhere to sustainable design and construction principles.
- 1.17. Development proposals are heavily reliant on the success of the new public transport system and it is critical that the infrastructure is in place and functioning before the first phase of construction is complete. Added to which, it is imperative in encouraging a modal switch that car parking provision is minimised and dual use is explored. Whilst careful thought appears to have been given to the surrounding road network, the implications of HGVs transporting waste and minerals and their use of the existing road infrastructure needs to be carefully considered.
- 1.18. Although stated in the AAP, care needs to be taken to ensure that any potential impacts associated with air, noise and water pollution as well as odour from waste management facilities, the quarry and other bad neighbour land uses are mitigated. The siting of development, close to the A379 and the A38 to the north must respond to high noise levels.
- 1.19. Potential negative issues which are highlighted throughout the review relate to the impact of developments on existing sites of environmental importance. It is important to ensure that with an increase in population and density, impacts are mitigated. New proposals relating to a county park, wildlife corridors and green space must have the carrying capacity to absorb a high population rather than placing pressure on remaining sites and the opportunity to create new habits and landscapes which will replace those lost through development. The AAP must also consider the visual impact of development proposals, particularly in relation to Saltram Park and the waterfront and on the primary access corridor into Plymouth. The question arises, could more ambitious proposals be explored to link the new community to the north such as the use of land bridges?
- 1.20. Proposals to site Sherford new development east of Hazeldene Quarry will inevitably lead to the sterilisation of future resources. In addition, even though Preferred Option 9 states that an adequate mineral supply will be kept in reserve for the future to the north of the quarry, it is implied that the future use of the site could take place within the next 20 years.
- 1.21. The siting of development proposals adjacent to the River Plym needs to respond to risks of flooding.
- 1.22. The structure of existing communities and potential changes to surrounding communities needs to be carefully considered. The proposals raise a number of basic questions:
- Will new residential development result in migration?
 - Will a significant number of houses be purchased as second homes?
 - Will targets for affordable housing be achieved and should targets be more ambitious?

- What will be the future demographic make up of the new residential areas be like? Will it result in a predominately middle aged or retired population?
- 1.23. The issue of demographics naturally leads on to considering how local employment opportunities will be supported. Issues worth considering at this stage are:
- Will people living in the new development areas actually work there, or will there be a significant level of in-migration on a daily basis from elsewhere in the City?
 - Will the development result an increase in in-migration from outside the City?
 - Will the creation of an attractive high quality environment result in the displacement of existing businesses from elsewhere and what is the consequential effect on local employees?
- 1.24. An overarching issue which is missing from the AAP and the SA of Sherford community, and which is fundamental, is what level of assessment has been undertaken of the relationship of the new development proposals to existing communities in Plymstock, Plympton and Chaddlewood? How will proposals change their demographic profile and will proposals result in a shift in travel to work and living patterns?
- 1.25. We recognise that the LDF will find it difficult to address many of the issues raised due to their uncertain nature at this stage in the design process. However, what the LDF can do is be instrumental in asking some of these questions and challenging developers. In an ideal world the LDF should push for proposals to be more ambitious in meeting sustainability objectives. This could be an exciting opportunity to put sustainable development into practice, remembering that no proposal can be considered in isolation.
- 1.26. The following recommendations are suggested ways of improving the AAP and its relationship with the Core Strategy:
- Each development proposals and Area Action Plan should not be considered in isolation. The LDF needs to recognise that depending on the timing of proposals, implementation and funding streams impacts may occur on adjacent land uses which need to be mitigated.
 - Throughout the phasing of development, it is important to ensure that the community functions sustainability with adequate services, facilities and infrastructure to meet all needs.
 - A detailed assessment of recreational carrying capacity based on the future population figures for the area needs to be undertaken in order to define limits beyond which sites of nature conservation, landscape or archaeology will be suffer. Proposals must seek to recreate/enhance sites of nature conservation and landscape.
 - The Area Action Plan would benefit from more text describing the context of the proposals.

- A strong link needs to be made between the Core Strategy Preferred Options and Area Action Plans particular in relation to design principles.
- In line with PPG25, flood risk will need to be assessed when deciding on specific locations for development, and Plymouth City Council should work with the Environment Agency to undertake a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for the City, which could be drawn upon when assessing development proposals.
- Public transport infrastructure needs to be in place well in advance of new development occurring. It is important not only to influence this modal shift through residential development (i.e. minimising car parking provision) but also through the decisions of major employers. All new large scale businesses should be required to submit green travel plans and commit some level of contribution /investment where development is not adjacent to the bus network to improve footpath and cycle route links. A contingency plan needs to be available to ensure that if people cannot be encouraged to make a modal switch potential issues relating to traffic congestion and air pollution can be resolved.
- A Design Guide should be produced for all development on the re-use of construction and demolition materials on site, e.g. through planning conditions requiring developers to provide a demolition plan and cover efficient water and energy use, reuse and sourcing of local materials as part of the sustainable construction and design guidance. Design proposals should consider opportunities to support renewable energy and sustainable urban drainage schemes. This commitment should not just be reflected in residential dwellings but also for large businesses through environmental management policies.
- Opportunities should be explored to link development proposals with waste processing facilities for example through the replenishment of soil for Chelson Meadows restored land raise site.
- Buffer zones need to be clearly defined to ensure potential impacts from air, noise and odour are mitigated.
- It would be beneficial to have a clearer understanding of whether reserves which under the new Sherford development could be extracted in the future given potential advances in technology.

Monitoring Implementation of the LDF:

- 1.27. The final section of the SA Report sets out the recommendations for monitoring the significant sustainability effects of the implementation of the Plymouth LDF. The monitoring should measure indicators of a causal link between the LDF implementation and the effects 'on the ground'. Possible indicators for each of the SA/SEA objectives are identified. It is recommended that Plymouth City Council work with the statutory environmental bodies and other authorities and stakeholders in Devon and the South West to agree indicators and share monitoring information.