

URS



Swale Core Strategy Issues and Strategic
Spatial Options Consultation
Sustainability Appraisal

Non Technical Summary
December 2010

Prepared for





1 Introduction

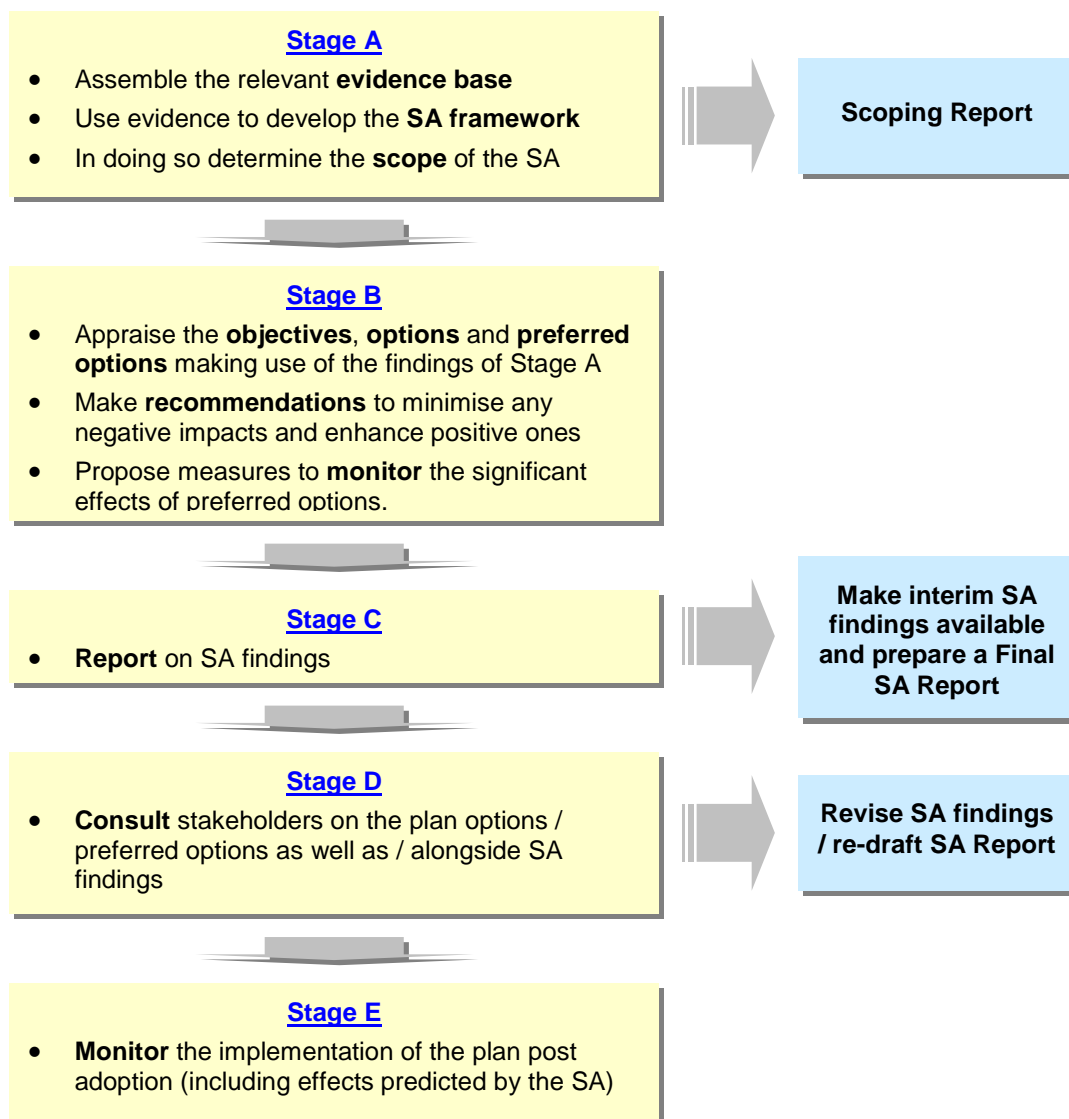
1.1 About this Non-technical Summary

- 1.1.1 Scott Wilson has been commissioned by Swale Borough Council to undertake an independent Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Core Strategy, which is a component of the Borough's emerging Local Development Framework (LDF).
- 1.1.2 The Core Strategy will set out the overarching planning framework for the Borough up to 2031. It will set out the long-term vision for the Borough and identify the broad locations, scale and type of development and supporting infrastructure (such as schools and road improvements) that will take place. It will include policies on issues such as new homes, jobs and the natural environment.
- 1.1.3 Scott Wilson has been involved in previous SA work with the Council, producing the original Scoping Report and the SA of The Sittingbourne Town Centre and Milton Creek Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).
- 1.1.4 This report is a non-technical summary of the findings of the Sustainability Appraisal of the Issues and Strategic Spatial Options Consultation Document. Its purpose is to report the findings of the Sustainability Appraisal in a way that can be easily understood and without the use of jargon or technical language.

1.2 Background

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) / Sustainability Appraisal (SA)

- 1.2.1 SEA and SA are processes by which the environmental, social and economic effects of a strategic action (a plan or a programme) are considered during its preparation. The aim is to identify the likely effects of the plan or programme in advance so that adverse effects can be minimised and beneficial effects can be enhanced. The findings of Sustainability Appraisal should be reflected in the adopted plan to help ensure that it maximises its contribution to future sustainability.
- 1.2.2 There are five stages undertaken for Sustainability Appraisal, as outlined below:



- 1.2.3 Stage A was undertaken in 2008. This identified the key sustainability issues for the Borough based on data collected and a review of related plans and programmes. The resulting Scoping Report sets out the Sustainability Appraisal Framework, which includes a set of Sustainability Objectives. It is available in full to download from the Council's website at: <http://www.swale.gov.uk/sustainability-appraisal-scoping-reports/>
- 1.2.4 The Issues and Strategic Spatial Options SA Report focuses on Stages B, C and D of the SA process. The four proposed strategic spatial options and the emerging Core Strategy and Development Management policies have been appraised and recommendations have been made to enhance beneficial effects and minimise adverse ones. The Issues and Strategic Spatial Options SA report should be read in conjunction with the Scoping Report.
- 1.2.5 Stage D involves the preparation of the SA Report ('Environmental Report'). Following consultation on the Issues and Strategic Spatial Options document the Council will review the consultation responses and develop the spatial options and emerging policies accordingly. This

SA Report has been produced to fulfil the requirements of the 'Environmental Report' as defined by the SEA regulations. A SA Statement will be produced for submission.

- 1.2.6 Stage E of the process (monitoring) will be undertaken by the Council following adoption of the Core Strategy. Monitoring proposals are contained in the report. These proposals set out the indicators considered necessary to enable the Council to identify whether the adopted Core Strategy is contributing towards achieving sustainable development. These indicators are provisional and a definitive list of monitoring indicators will be published in a final SA Statement following adoption of the Core Strategy.

1.3 Development of the Core Strategy

- 1.3.1 Swale Borough Council has developed four Strategic Spatial Options for the Core Strategy. These options are the first stage of the options generation which will inform the development of the Swale Core Strategy. These options present different ways at which development might be distributed across the Borough and by how much. The Council held an option generating workshop in May 2010 with key stakeholders to inform the development of the Core Strategy Vision and these Spatial Options.

- 1.3.2 The development of the options has been informed by a number of baseline studies. The Council have decided that whilst the South East plan will no longer be in place by the time the Core Strategy is progressed, as RSS's¹ will be removed by the Localism Bill (due December 2010) it is considered that use of the SE Plan housing figures together with the Council's evidence base and demographic forecasting, allows for a readily understood and evidential base upon which to derive 'growth scenarios'. Although this will be kept under review.

- 1.3.3 In arriving at the four Strategic Spatial Options, the council discounted a number of other options that were not considered to be 'reasonable'² and therefore were not developed further.

- 1.3.4 The four spatial options that are being consulted upon are:

- Option 1 – Continuing previous policy provision for development concentrated on urban areas
- Option 2 - Continuing previous policy provision for development concentrated on urban areas and larger villages
- Option 3 – Step change in employment growth and continuing previous policy provision for development concentrated at urban areas; and
- Option 4 – Step change in employment and housing growth.

- 1.3.5 Details of the individual options can be found in the Consultation document. These options will be refined and a preferred approach for the Spatial Strategy determined after further public consultation in 2011.

- 1.3.6 The future programme for the production of the Core Strategy and Development Management DPD is:

¹ Announcement made on the 6th July by Eric Pickles, however decision overturned in high courts in November 2010. The Localism Bill has been announced by the Government (10th December 2010)

² Swale Borough Council. Pick your own – Issues and Strategic Spatial Options January 2011

- 1.3.7 **Stage 2** - Preferred Options and Site Options Report – taking forward the consultation responses and technical evidence, the Council chooses and includes its preferred spatial option. This document will also include:
- The general location of those sites the Council considers may be able to contribute toward the overall preferred option and a general assessment of each,
 - Greater level of detail about development amounts and mix, and
 - More detail on the set of policies.
- 1.3.8 **Stage 3** - Consultation Draft Core Strategy – consultation upon the contents of a near completed Core Strategy.
- 1.3.9 **Stage 4** - Proposed Submission Draft Core Strategy – consultation on the completed Core Strategy prior to submission to the Secretary of State.

2 Summary of the Sustainability Appraisal Report

2.1.1 The Sustainability Appraisal has concluded that the Issues and Strategic Spatial Options and the emerging Core Strategy and Development Management policies are broadly sustainable. In general it is likely to have beneficial effects across a range of issues: economic, environmental and social, although some adverse effects are also possible especially when considering the higher housing and economic growth levels of options 3 and 4 and the delivery of the Sittingbourne Southern Relief Road (SSRR).

2.1.2 On a number of occasions it is considered likely that there will be significant effects (both positive and negative) over and above those that would have occurred anyway, under the current Local Plan.

2.2 Likely Significant Beneficial effects

Climate

Policy DM1 – Sustainable Design and Construction

2.1.3 This policy approach will deliver the framework for development to be built to be adaptable to changing lifestyles and climate through encouraging buildings for life standards and developments to achieve Code for Sustainable Homes (CSH) and BREEAM standards, over the long term this should achieve significant benefits. This policy approach also achieves significant long term benefits through the mechanism for delivery across the Borough of renewable, decentralised and low-carbon energy generation at a range of scales and for all forms of development. It will also deliver significant long term benefits with regard to the use of sustainable construction methods, energy efficiency and water efficiency measures once the technologies and developments have been established.

Water

Policy CP4 – Sustainability and Environment Cross cutting policy

2.1.4 This policy approach will deliver significant long term benefits with regard to water efficiency due to implementing sustainability measures into new developments.

Housing

Policy CP6 Homes and Communities

2.1.5 This policy approach will set the total number of homes to be built to 2031, it identifies that housing will be required to be delivered that is sustainable and of a high quality. This policy seeks to achieve 20% of market housing to be delivered to lifetime homes standards and meet the Building for Life criteria. The policy will also have regard to the thresholds for affordable housing. Over the medium to long term these policy requirements are appraised to deliver significant benefits.

Policy DM10 Affordable Housing

- 2.1.6 This policy will provide the framework for delivering affordable housing across the Borough over the plan period. Over the medium to long term, as greater numbers of units are delivered this policy is appraised to deliver significant benefits.

Policy DM11 Rural Housing Policy

- 2.1.7 This policy approach is appraised to deliver significant medium to long term benefits as it will require all housing proposals to be kept affordable and for locally eligible residents.

Local Economy

Spatial Options 3 and 4

- 2.1.8 Spatial Options 3 and 4 propose a higher rate of employment growth (595,000sqm) and facilitates a major expansion of the Kent Science Park as well as expansion at the Port of Sheerness. This proposed growth is intended to meet the specific needs of key employment sectors, such as knowledge and green economies all contributing to economic development and growth across the Borough.

2.3 Likely Significant Negative Effects

Landscape

Spatial Option 3

- 2.1.9 This Spatial Option proposes housing delivery within the existing urban areas (Sittingbourne, Sheerness and Queenborough), urban extensions and additional housing requirements met through expansion or infill development in the key village locations of Iwade, Teynham or Minster/Halfway. Development at the village locations will have a greater negative effect on the rural landscape and valued natural environment of the Borough.
- 2.1.10 Although, this option, as all options requires the release of Greenfield land it requires the smallest amount for new housing development of the four proposed Spatial Options but it does include new homes in the Port of Sheerness. It therefore offers greatest potential to protect the countryside and high grade agricultural land across the Borough however the scale of development is still significant. The Greenfield land surrounding Sittingbourne is high grade agricultural land.
- 2.1.11 A considerable size of Greenfield land is allocated to deliver the additional employment development of 60ha. Expansion is proposed at the Kent Science Park up to 145,000 sq m, providing 4,800 direct jobs in total over the long term, this expansion and the other required employment growth development has associated negative impact on the AONB and surrounding countryside.
- 2.1.12 This option proposes the completion of the Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road (SNRR) to the A2 and the new junction to the M2 providing the 1st phase of the Sittingbourne Southern Relief Road (SSRR) with the intention to relive traffic congestion across the Borough. The M2 junction improvements could impact upon the AONB and there are considerable environmental

implications associated with the SSRR as the proposed route goes through areas of high quality landscape value, agricultural land and important countryside.

Spatial Option 4

- 2.1.13 This option delivers the greatest levels of housing and economic growth across the Borough and will therefore have the greatest negative effect on the Boroughs landscape and townscape. It will require the release of a considerable amount of Greenfield land – surrounding Sittingbourne, at the Kent Science Park and the identified village locations. This Greenfield land potentially includes areas of high agricultural quality and landscape value as well as valued countryside used for the enjoyment of all.
- 2.1.14 This option proposes the completion of the SNRR to the A2 and the SSRR (including the new junction to the M2) with the intention to relive traffic congestion across the Borough. The M2 junction improvements could impact upon the AONB and there are considerable environmental implications associated with the SSRR as the proposed route goes through areas of high quality landscape value, agricultural land and important countryside causing considerable environmental effects.

Soil

Spatial Options 1, 3 and 4

- 2.1.15 The Greenfield land surrounding Sittingbourne is high grade agricultural land, this land is identified for expansion of Sittingbourne to meet the options requirements.

Spatial Option 2

- 2.1.16 Land surrounding Newington is identified as Grade 1 and 2 agricultural land, this is high quality land and mitigation should be put in place if development is proposed for this land.

Biodiversity

Spatial Option 4

- 2.1.17 Planning for a higher housing growth to meet the higher employment growth scenario potentially has a significant negative impact on the natural environment of the Borough. Kent has a wealth of biodiversity and protected habitats. The high level of housing and employment planned for of the plan period (and beyond) brings with it considerable pressure from new residents and their associated habits which require considerable mitigation measures to be considered. In particular, the expansion of the Port of Sheerness has potential to negatively effect the European designation (SPA) within the vicinity of the port. Identification of locations for potential housing sites at Iwade and Minster / Halfway are within close proximity to the SPA and SSI.

2.2 Mitigation and Monitoring

Mitigation

- 2.2.1 Mitigation means taking measures to offset adverse effects or to enhance beneficial effects and is essential in making a plan or programme sustainable. The Sustainability Appraisal has

identified a number of significant adverse effects as well as a number of significant beneficial effects along with the minor beneficial and adverse effects. Therefore measures have been proposed as mitigation to help the development of the Council's Spatial Option and the evolution of the Core Strategy and Development Management policies. The Council will consider these measures along with comments received during the consultation period.

Monitoring

- 2.2.2 A set of indicators for monitoring the effects of the Core Strategy has been proposed and will be considered by the Council. These indicators are intended to provide a means of determining whether the Core Strategy is having unexpected significant adverse effects. These indicators will be developed as the Core Strategy and Development Management Documents progress. At later stages in the SA process specific indicators will be proposed for each sustainability problem identified during the Scoping of the Sustainability Appraisal. Indicators will also be proposed to monitor the known likely significant effects of the Core Strategy (discussed above).

3 How to comment

3.1.1 The Sustainability Appraisal Report is intended to inform public consultation on the Issues and Strategic Spatial Options and comments are welcomed concerning the findings of the Sustainability Appraisal process and the content of the Sustainability Appraisal Report.

3.1.2 If you would like to comment on the Sustainability Appraisal Report, or have comments on the Core Strategy itself, please contact:

3.1.3 By email: pyo@swale.gov.uk

3.1.4 By post:

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