



## **Southampton Core Strategy Development Plan Document (January 2010)**

### **Sustainability Appraisal Post Adoption Statement**

#### **Introduction**

This Sustainability Statement provides a summary of the assessment of the Core Strategy. It has been produced in accordance with Regulation 36 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 and with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (16) (3) and (4). This requires the local authority to set out:

- a. how sustainability considerations have been integrated into the Core Strategy;
- b. how the sustainability assessment has been taken into account;
- c. how opinions expressed in response to the consultation have been taken into account;
- d. how the results of any consultations have been taken into account;
- e. the reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and
- f. the measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan or programme.

#### **Core Strategy**

Following an examination in public in July 2009, Southampton's Core Strategy DPD was found sound by an independent Planning Inspector with some changes. The final Core Strategy was adopted by Southampton City Council on 20 January 2010.

The Core Strategy is supported by a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to ensure that the strategy accords with the principles of sustainable development and an Appropriate Assessment (AA) to demonstrate that the policies in the plan do not harm European designated sites for nature conservation.

## **Sustainability considerations**

Sustainability assessments were produced by Halcrow consultants at different stages of the Core Strategy and were available for consultation at the same time as the strategy. The following assessments were undertaken and informed the Core Strategy:

### Core Strategy Issues and Options stage:

1. Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (SA/SEA) Scoping Report (May 2006), Halcrow

This report set the context for the assessment, established the baseline and decided on the scope of future assessments. The scoping report highlighted a number of relevant policies, plans, programmes and legislation which would provide a context for the Core Strategy.

The baseline data was used to help draw out a range of key issues for the city including climate change, pollution, an ageing population and lack of employment opportunities. These key issues were set out in the Issues and Options paper and developed in later stages.

### Core Strategy Preferred Options:

2. Sustainability Appraisal, Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appropriate Assessment (October 2006), Halcrow

Two full reports were used to help develop and refine options and to assess their effects for the Preferred Options and later papers. They included a preliminary assessment of all policies, a detailed assessment of policies with a significant negative impact and an assessment of cumulative effect. This initial report also incorporated Appropriate Assessment Screening within the document.

The Preferred Options paper incorporated results of the Sustainability Appraisal for each chapter linked to the preferred policy options. This included a general comment on the findings for the chapters, a note on the preferred options and the identification of any areas of concern to be taken forward under appropriate assessment.

### Proposed Submission Core Strategy:

3. Sustainability Appraisal & Strategic Environmental Assessment (December 2008), Halcrow

Due to the number of changes made between the Preferred Options and Proposed Submission papers and the length of time elapsed it was decided to produce a second full report at Proposed Submission stage. This resulted in detailed text changes to the Core Strategy including reference to the provision of high quality open spaces to alleviate recreational pressure on the New Forest in the key principles directing development.

## Submission Core Strategy:

4. Sustainability Appraisal & Strategic Environmental Assessment Revision (March 2009), Halcrow

As a result of responses received on the Core Strategy and sustainability assessments (December 2008) and changes proposed by the council, a revised SA Report (main report and appendices C and D) was produced.

## **Consultation**

The sustainability assessments were consulted on at the same time as the Core Strategy and were sent out directly to a range of organisations including the designated Consultation Bodies; Natural England (or its predecessors; the Countryside Agency and English Nature), the Environment Agency and English Heritage. At the Scoping Report consultation, this was extended to cover a further 18 key stakeholders including adjacent local authorities, interest groups and government bodies. At the Preferred Options stage, the Sustainability Appraisal was publicised more widely with a summary leaflet sent to all Core Strategy consultees.

In the process of producing the assessments, Halcrow had consulted with specific organisations on the methodology and the scope of the assessment. Formal consultation responses were received from Countryside Agency; English Heritage; English Nature (and later from Natural England); Environment Agency; Highways Agency; Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust; New Forest National Park Authority; Test Valley Borough Council; and Eastleigh Borough Council. The number of organisations who responded decreased from seven on the Scoping Report (May 2006), to five on the initial full report (October 2006) and three responses on the second full report (December 2008).

The points raised and actions taken in response to these are set out in the two full SA/SEA reports (October 2006 and December 2008) and in the March 2009 revision.

## **Justification of options and alternatives chosen**

The Core Strategy reflects national and regional planning policies; the approach of the City of Southampton Strategy and the wider approach to development in the sub region. Southampton is a predominantly built up area and has expanded to its boundaries. This limits the reasonable alternative options available for the growth of the city and therefore it was decided that the options presented should be a range of detailed policy options instead of different strategic approaches to development.

Following the Issues and Options discussion paper, the preferred options for the Core Strategy were chosen based on consultation responses, findings from the sustainability appraisal analysis and input from the emerging South East Plan. The background paper 'Alternative Options Considered & Rejected' (October 2006) sets out the justification for these choices.

The preferred options were largely taken forward into policies in the Proposed Submission Core Strategy. Some of the Preferred Policy Options were combined in the 25 policies in the final plan. Additional policies were included on the Port of Southampton and flood risk. Affordable housing targets were amended following a viability study and a family housing target was established. Preferred options not taken forward included detailed car parking and open space standards as further work is required to deliver these.

The examination in public on the Core Strategy provided the opportunity for the Inspector to assess whether the plan was the most appropriate approach. The Inspector stated in his report that the Sustainability Appraisal was suitably comprehensive and without material omissions and noted the strategic level endorsement by Natural England. In finding the Core Strategy sound (with a few changes), the Inspector agreed that it was justified, effective and consistent with national policy. Planning Inspectorate guidance notes that to be 'justified' the document has to be founded on a robust and credible evidence base and is the most appropriate strategy when considered against reasonable alternatives.

### **Inspector's changes**

The Inspector approved the Core Strategy with a number of changes. He stated in his report that 'none of these changes should materially alter the substance of the overall plan and its policies, or undermine the sustainability appraisal and participatory processes already undertaken'.

The principal changes related to detailed policy wording on flood risk, transport and the Port of Southampton, reductions in City Centre retail targets and further reference to Habitats Regulations Assessment. The open space policy has been amended to safeguard existing open space and help deliver new open space beyond the city. None of these changes will make further assessment necessary.

### **Monitoring**

The Core Strategy will be monitored to assess data and trends and to consider whether the approach set out continues to be the best one given the available alternatives and that the policies are relevant and effective. Chapter 7 in the Core Strategy sets out policy outcomes and delivery mechanisms and key local and Core Output indicators.

The formal monitoring of the Core Strategy will take the form of an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). The Sustainability Appraisal proposed additional monitoring information in support of the sustainability effects. The monitoring framework will be refined and expanded over time in accordance with Government guidance and following further consultation with South East England Partnership Board, PUSH, Southampton Partnership and key partners.