

Southampton City Council

Core Strategy
Sustainability Appraisal & Strategic
Environmental Assessment
Non Technical Summary (Draft)
November 2008

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Introduction

This document is a summary of the Sustainability Report which has been produced as part of a combined Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of Southampton's Core Strategy Development Plan Document. A full version of the Sustainability Appraisal Report is available to download from Southampton City Council's website at <http://www.southampton.gov.uk>.

What are SA and SEA?

The combined SA/SEA (referred to as SA) process aims to ensure that the likely significant sustainability and environmental effects arising from the Core Strategy are identified, assessed, mitigated, communicated and monitored, and that opportunities for public involvement are provided. It enables Southampton City Council to incorporate environmental considerations into the decision-making process throughout the production of the Core Strategy in an integrated way.

The legal requirement for SA is established through the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. For SEA it is placed the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (2001/42/EC) and the SEA Regulations 2004.

Guidance from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) (formerly the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)) recommends carrying out the processes of SA and SEA together as they follow a similar process. Therefore this approach has been carried out for assessment of Southampton's Core Strategy.

What is the Core Strategy?

The Core Strategy sets out the long term vision for Southampton. It explains how much and what development there will be in the city (in the vision and strategic objectives) and where this development will be located (in the spatial strategy and policies). The Core Strategy seeks to implement the spatial policies of the Regional Spatial Strategy (the South East Plan) and its sub-regional component, as well as incorporating its housing requirement. It sets the broad locations for delivering housing and other strategic development needs such as employment, retail, leisure, community, essential public services and transport development.

The SA Process

The SA process involves five stages, described below:

Table 1: the five stages of SA

SA stages	
A	Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope.
B	Developing and refining alternatives and assessing effects.
C	Preparing the Sustainability Report.
D	Consulting on preferred options of the plan and the Sustainability Report.
E	Monitoring the significant effects of implementing the plan on the environment.

A more detailed methodology is presented in the full version of the Sustainability Report.

Consultation

Public involvement through consultation is a key element of SA. The SEA Regulations set specific requirements for consultation with the Statutory Consultation Bodies, as well as the public and ‘other interested parties’.

In England, the Statutory Consultation Bodies are:

- English Heritage;
- The Environment Agency; and
- Natural England.

Southampton City Council has extended this consultation to include:

- City of Southampton Society;
- Eastleigh Borough Council;
- Government office for the South East;
- Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust;
- Hampshire County Council;
- Highways Agency;
- Isle of Wight Council;
- New Forest District Council;
- New Forest National Park Authority;
- South East England Development Agency;
- South East England Regional Assembly;
- Southampton Sustainability Forum;
- South East Climate Change Partnership; and
- Test Valley Borough Council.

Consultation has previously been undertaken on the SA Scoping Report and Preferred Options SA Report (including the Appropriate Assessment). The comments received were fed into the SA process and influenced the development of the plan.

The consultation period for the Submission SA Report is from December 2008 to February 2009. All of the comments on the SA Report will be taken into consideration by the Planning Inspectorate.

Details of how the SA process has influenced the Core Strategy will be recorded in a Post-Adoption Statement which will be published alongside the adopted Core Strategy in 2010.

What does the SA Report Contain?

A key product of the SA process is the SA Report, which contains:

- An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes;
- Baseline information about the environmental, social and economic characteristics of Southampton;
- An appraisal of the strategic alternatives;
- Any relevant existing environmental and sustainability problems;
- The likely significant effects on the environment and sustainability;
- The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment and sustainability as a result of the plan or programme; and
- A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring.

What does this Non-Technical Summary Contain?

This Non-Technical Summary contains:

- Information about plans and policies relevant to the Core Strategy;
- A summary of the key environmental and sustainability issues within Southampton;
- The objectives of the Core Strategy;
- The SA objectives used to assess the Core Strategy policies;
- A discussion of alternatives to the policies within the Core Strategy considered;
- A summary of the significant environmental effects of the Core Strategy;
- Mitigation measures for policies identified as having significant adverse environmental effects; and
- Monitoring proposals.

Plans, Policies and Programmes Relevant to the Core Strategy

The Core Strategy is affected by and will itself influence a wide range of other plans and programmes as national, regional and local levels. The SA Scoping Report contained a full review of the relevant policies, plans and programmes and details of how they interact with the development of the Core Strategy. The Submission SA Report contains a comprehensive summary of this review.

Key Environmental Characteristics of Southampton

The City of Southampton is located centrally on the South Coast of England. The lower tidal reach of the River Test forms a natural boundary to its Southwest, while the River Itchen dissects the City North to South. These rivers merge to create a major channel (Southampton Water) joining the Solent. With a population at 231,200, the land use in Southampton is predominately urban, on South Hampshire Lowlands. There is a strong maritime influence, riverine corridors and greenways. Approximately 16% of the area is open space with 20 Conservation Areas, historic parks and gardens contributing to the sense of place and historic townscape.

The region contains a diverse range of habitats; terrestrial, estuarine and marine, and has a large number of nature conservation sites. There are 3 areas within Southampton designated for their international importance: Solent and Southampton Water (SPA and Ramsar), Solent Maritime (SAC) and the River Itchen (SAC). There are 4 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and 36 Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINC). The New Forest (SAC, SPA and Ramsar) site is also within close vicinity of Southampton.

Key Environmental and Sustainability Issues within Southampton

Key environmental and sustainability issues were identified during the scoping stage. More specifically this included looking at possible tensions or inconsistencies between current or future baseline conditions and proposed SA objectives. Findings included the following key issues, and opportunities for tackling them:

Air Quality

- Areas of poor air quality.
- Incidents of industrial and chemical pollution occurring outside the cities boundaries.

Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna

- Habitat loss, damage, fragmentation and isolation. Include policies to promote the protection, enhancement and creation of habitats.
- Direct habitat and species loss. Avoidance of sensitive habitats and designated sites from new development schemes. Policies should be aimed at ensuring that a high level of protection is provided to statutory and non-statutory designated sites.
- Pollution (air, water, noise, light). Ensure all forms of pollution and their impacts are considered when developing policies, including light and noise pollution.
- Displacement due to climate change.

Climate

- Increasing incidence of drought; hotter, drier summers with 8 - 23% less rainfall. Encourage the efficient use of existing water resources and a reduction in water consumption.

- Increased flooding; stormier, wetter winters with 6 - 12% more rainfall. Opportunities to avoid / reduce flood risks.
- Sea level rise in combination with land subsidence is expected to generate rises of 6-7mm per year, or 54cm by 2080. Promote energy efficient buildings, land use and renewable energy.

Cultural Heritage (including architectural and archaeological heritage)

- Renovation of 'Buildings at Risk' is dependant on aid, which is expensive and buildings fall into disrepair. Recognise the importance of cultural heritage and archaeological features and the importance of regenerating and re-using important buildings, particularly those listed as 'buildings at risk'.
- There are more than 450 listed buildings in Southampton and around a further 90 locally listed buildings. Two of the listed buildings are on the buildings at risk register.

Economic Considerations

- Levels of unemployment - people eventually withdraw from labour market. Employment deprivation due to factors such as high dependency and low skills and attainment.
- Southampton is ranked 91st most deprived out of all 354 Local Authorities in England and Wales in the Overall Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007.
- High number of residents in employment travelling greater distances to work. Encourage local employment and reduce the distance that people travel to work.
- Lack of accessibility to community services in deprived areas. Ensure community services are located within easy reach of the communities they serve and that they have good public transport links.

Landscape and Townscape

- Loss of urban landscape character and features as a result of development pressures. Non-designated landscapes are not afforded protection in planning policy and may be lost or damaged by development proposals. Include policies which recognise the value of important urban features such as the Old Town and parks and include policies to ensure proposals for development landscape schemes reflect the urban character of the City.

Material Assets

- Burning of fossil fuel contributing to the greenhouse effect. Continue policies that promote renewable energy resources within the city.
- Waste has been growing at 3% per annum in Hampshire, Southampton and Portsmouth. Ongoing requirement to dispose of some types of waste in landfill. Landfill causes

substantial social and environmental impacts e.g. groundwater and surface water pollution. Promote recycling and the reduction of waste produced. Seek alternative, more sustainable methods of disposal.

- High levels of ambient / nuisance noise which disturbs residents and wildlife.
- High levels of ambient light pollution disturb residents and wildlife. Limit the length of time buildings, transport infrastructure, etc can be lit.
- Mineral extractions result in substantial environmental and social impacts.
- Pollution issues relating to contaminated land. Remediation of sites can result in loss of features of biodiversity, landscape and intrinsic value. Financial and environmental limitations.
- Massive quantities of unavoidable waste. Inadequate infrastructure to avoid, minimise, recycle waste at present. Large quantities of miscellaneous waste which cannot be planned for.
- Promote infrastructure for recycling e.g. reuse and recycling of demolition waste in new development schemes.
- Reduce road congestion by increasing travel choice. Promote sustainable forms of transport, such as cycling, walking etc and ensure public transport is 'joined up'.
- Reduce pollution levels by increasing travel choice.
- Reduce lorry traffic.

Social Considerations (including population)

- Southampton population's density is increasing (217,445 people and 91,217 households), resulting in increased demand for infrastructure. Environmental, social and economic considerations are exacerbated.
- Ageing populations.
- Increasing student population.
- Crime in society.
- Lack of employment opportunities, particularly in deprived areas. Encourage employment, targeted towards areas of need, to reduce the number of people on income support.
- Lack of affordable housing, requirement for substantially more housing. Support mixed use developments, with adequate services and facilities to support and sustain the local community.

Human Health

- People living in poorer areas have a 30% higher death rate than people living in the rest of the city.
- Life expectancy for males and females are increasing.

Soil and Land Contamination

- Contamination of the soil resource. Ensure the appropriate remediation and reuse of contaminated land. Waste should be dealt with in ways that minimise environmental impacts by setting up waste management systems. Ensure the hazard risk to the population and environment is minimised.

Water (including water quality, flood risk, groundwater and water resources)

- Climate Change - increase in the incidence of droughts and heavy rainfall and flooding events that are hard to plan for. Ensure development proposals do not exacerbate flooding elsewhere in the catchment. Ensure consultation with the Environment Agency with regard to siting and design of developments.
- Groundwater - vulnerability to pollutants, unsustainable abstraction and flooding.
- Water Pollution - exacerbated by low river flows and resulting in substantial clean up costs and effects on ecosystems. Recognise and implement Environment Agency's surface water protection policies. Consider overall siting of development schemes in order to minimise the potential effects on water quality, the retention of riparian zone and use of Sustainable Urban Drainage.
- Increasing water demand coupled with wastage, excessive use, unpredictable supply, unsustainable abstraction. Ensure any required abstractions do not compromised flows and that discharges augment flows.

Core Strategy Objectives

The strategic objectives of the Core Strategy are set out below:

Strategic Objectives	
A growing regional centre within a prosperous South Hampshire	
S1	Support the South Hampshire sub-regional strategy to sustain and enhance Southampton as a regional city, a focus for growth and investment and home to an inspirational waterfront and thriving International Port.
S2	Promote a dynamic, competitive economy offering a wide range of secure and sustainable jobs, protecting employment land where appropriate. The growing economy will be supported by well qualified, skilled residents.
S3	Create a vibrant, high quality regional city centre that is the focus for major retail; tourism; leisure; and office investment and connects with the waterfront.
S4	Support the varied operations of the Port of Southampton as a major driver of the economy and regional gateway.
S5	Ensure that all development is supported by appropriate and inclusive infrastructure provision.
S6	Ensure that the city's spatial strategy is implemented via cross boundary partnerships with other adjoining Local Authorities and other members of the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH).
Strong and distinctive neighbourhoods - A good place to live	
S7	Create excellence in design quality. Public spaces should take priority over car-dominated roads. Well-designed and contemporary public and private realms will be safe, accessible and create a sense of place and a rich built environment in which communities can flourish.
S8	Conserve and enhance the city's historic environment and raise awareness of issues relating to the historic environment.
S9	Create excellent sustainable neighbourhoods and neighbourhood centres characterised by strong community infrastructure and high quality homes.
S10	Deliver a mix of housing with a range of affordable house types.
S11	Tackle deprivation and improve health and well being by creating neighbourhoods that are balanced with diverse mixed communities and reducing the gap in inequality between neighbourhoods.
S12	Create accessible high quality parks and open spaces that contribute towards the city's

	network of open spaces and promote participation in sport and active recreation.
S13	Ensure that the city reflects the varied culture and heritage of all sections of the community. The city should be a high quality destination for visitors.
S14	Maintain an adequate gap between Southampton and adjacent urban areas, and enhance the gateways to the city.
S15	Create a high quality physical environment and public realm within the city, supporting the Southampton Partnership vision for a better city for people to live, work and play.
An environmentally sustainable city	
S16	Ensure that Southampton addresses the challenge of climate change.
S17	To support the uptake of renewable energy and Combined Heat and Power (CHP) in the city to reduce the development's predicted CO ₂ emissions.
S18	Ensure that all development reduces the need to travel and is supported by a superior alternative transport system, attracting people to walk, cycle or use the bus or train. Manage car trips and deliver appropriate mitigation measures. Ensure that road space is managed fairly, improve air quality, control congestion and improve the street scene.
S19	Conserve and enhance the city's biodiversity, ensuring that designated sites and protected species are safeguarded. Nature conservation opportunities in existing open spaces and in new development will be maximised and local awareness of biodiversity issues raised.
S20	Adopt a 'reduce and mitigate' approach to flooding and adapt positively to the threats posed in development areas.

SA Objectives

SA can be approached by adopting an objective led method. Although not a requirement, SA objectives are a recognised way of considering the environmental and sustainability effects of a plan and comparing alternatives to it.

To ensure compatibility, the SA objectives have been checked against the Core Strategy objectives and against each other. This comparison is shown in the Submission SA Report.

The formulation of SA objectives has taken account of the environmental topics identified in the SEA Directive, which states that the Environmental Report should include assessment of the following topics:

Biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the inter-relationship between the above factors.

Table 2: SA Objectives used to assess the policies in the Core Strategy

SA Objectives	
1	Ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent, sustainably constructed and affordable home.
2	Reduce the risk of flooding and the resulting detriment to public well-being, the economy and the environment.
3	Improve the health and well-being of the population and reduce inequalities in health.
4	Reduce poverty and social exclusion and close the gap between the most deprived areas of the City and the rest of the region.
5	Facilitate educational achievement levels across the City. Develop opportunities for everyone to acquire the skills needed to find and remain in work, to support long-term competitiveness of the City.
6	Create and sustain vibrant communities with reduced crime and fear of crime.
7	Improve accessibility to and enhance services and facilities.
8	Encourage increased engagement in cultural activity across all sections of the City's community. Support cultural events and sporting activities in the City's parks, commons and open spaces.
9	Improve efficiency in land use through the re-use of previously developed land and existing buildings.
10	Reduce air pollution and ensure air quality continues to improve.
11	Address the causes of climate change through reducing emissions of greenhouse gases and ensure that the City is prepared for its impacts.
12	Protect, enhance and make accessible the City's biodiversity and green spaces. Encourage the creation of green open spaces in new developments and maintain an adequate gap between Southampton and adjacent urban areas.
13	Reduce road congestion by reducing the need to travel and promoting sustainable modes of transport
14	Encourage sustainable consumption and production by promoting sustainably produced local products.
15	Reduce waste generation to achieve the sustainable management of waste.
16	Maintain and improve the water quality of river, estuary and coast, and achieve sustainable water resources management.
17	Increase energy efficiency, and the proportion of energy generated from renewable sources in the City.
18	Facilitate high and stable levels of employment so everyone can benefit from economic growth and stimulate economic revival in priority regeneration areas.
19	Develop a dynamic, diverse and knowledge-based economy that excels in innovation with higher value, lower impact activities.
20	Conserve and enhance Southampton's townscape, character and historic environments.

Issues & Options (September 2006)

An Interim SA was prepared alongside the publication of the Issues and Options for the Core Strategy to provide an early assessment of potential environmental and sustainability effects of the plan. The Issues and Options addressed the following broad topic areas:

- Built environment; natural environment; employment; housing; transport; city centre; neighbourhoods; the waterfront; open space; and implementation of the strategy.

Preferred Options (October 2006)

The SA of the Preferred Options employed a three phase approach to assessment:

- A **preliminary assessment** provided a coarse indication of whether a particular option will help to promote sustainability or detract from it;
- For any policy which may have significant negative environmental consequences, a **detailed assessment** was used to examine the scale, severity, permanence, significance and level of certainty of impacts; and
- All policies were scrutinised for their **cumulative effect** on each of the environmental topics identified in the SEA Directive.

The assessment revealed that the majority would be either neutral with the SA objectives or lead to benefits in one form or another. There were nevertheless a number of policies which were identified as having potential adverse effects and these were looked at in more detail.

Submission Policies Significant Effects Assessment

Each of the Core Strategy Policies has been evaluated against the sustainability objectives. Full details of the assessment can be found in the SA Report. The key findings of the assessment are as follows:

- Four **significant adverse effects** (for one or more SA objectives) have been identified, resulting from four policies (CS1: City Centre, CS2 Major Development, CS4: Housing Delivery and CS12: Accessible and Positive Waterfront), for four SA objectives; climate change, waste management in the long term, flooding risk and biodiversity.
- Twelve policies have been identified to have a **significant beneficial effect** on several SA objectives (CS3, CS6, CS10, CS11, CS13, CS14, CS15, CS18, CS19, CS20, CS22 and CS23).
- 10 policies have been identified to have a **minor adverse effect** on one or more SA objectives (CS1, CS2, CS4, CS5, CS6, CS9, CS12, CS13, CS17 and CS18).
- All of the 25 policies have been identified to have a **minor beneficial effect** on one or more of the SA objectives.
- **Uncertainties** remain over the effects of nineteen of the policies on one or more SA objectives.

- **Cumulative effects:** Seven SA topics (Cultural Heritage, Economic Considerations, Landscape/Townscape, Material Assets, Social Consideration, Health and Soil and Land Contamination) were identified to have positive cumulative effects resulting from the policies, one SA topic (Air) is uncertain, while the remaining three SA topics (Biodiversity, Climate and Water) have negative cumulative effects, due to new housing, retail, employment, education and health developments.

Mitigation Measures for Policies Identified as having Significant Adverse Environmental Effects

In instances where Core Strategy Policies that, when evaluated against the SA objectives, were found to generate a uncertain, negative or significantly negative impacts a method, where possible, by which to mitigate these effects has been suggested. These mitigation measures can be divided into two categories according to the scale of their influence.

- **Strategic:** Mitigation measures that, if put in place, effect the whole of the LDF Core Strategy area for example: *“Work with PUSH, government agencies and other stakeholders to understand the various impacts on sites of nature conservation value, and secure funding for the long term management of these sites”*.
- **Local Measures:** Mitigation measures that could be selectively applied where appropriate to specific policy or policy area, for example: *“Employ development flood risk assessment to identify site-specific mitigation (e.g. raised walkways). Ensure Environment Agency advice on development is heeded”*.

Monitoring

The monitoring requirements typically associated with the SA process are recognised as placing heavy demands on authorities with SA responsibilities. For the purposes of efficiency, it is beneficial if the monitoring strategy builds on monitoring systems which are already in place. The monitoring proposals will also identify any gaps in monitoring undertaken at present, so that consideration might be given to how these could be addressed in the longer term.

The proposed monitoring programme aims to give a flavour of progress against each objective, while also monitoring the identified significant negative and positive effects. Examples of the proposed measures include:

- Percentage of population with access to key health services by public transport;
- Number of affordable homes built annually;
- Children living in low-income families;
- Carbon emissions per capita; and
- Travel to work mode by type.

Next Steps

The Core Strategy Submission Paper will be submitted in November 2008 to Government via the Government Office for the South East and the Planning Inspectorate. The SA Report will accompany the Submission Paper of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy. At this stage, the Government Office has seven weeks to review the Core Strategy and make any comments as part of the independent examination of the Strategy before it proceeds to the Examination Stage.

All comments on the SA Report, received between 18th December 2008 and 6th February 2009 (at 5pm) will be taken into consideration by the Planning Inspectorate.

Comments relating to the content of this Sustainability Report, and other queries regarding this consultation, should be sent to:

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