

Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report

Report of the Planning Portfolio Holder

Recommended:

1. That the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report, including its appendices and summary as annexed to the report, be approved.
2. That the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Development, in consultation with the Planning Portfolio Holder, be authorised to make changes of a minor nature to improve the presentation of the document and correct typographical errors prior to publication.

SUMMARY:

- A Scoping Report has been prepared in line with national guidance to fulfil the first stage of the sustainability appraisal process. It will replace the Scoping Reports approved in 2017 and 2018.
- The Scoping Report includes baseline information, identifies sustainability issues and updates the sustainability objectives.
- The Scoping Report has been subject to consultation for a period of 6 weeks. The responses received have been taken into account in the preparation of the document proposed for approval.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report seeks approval of the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (including its appendices and summary) as annexed to the report.
- 1.2 The current Scoping Report was approved in 2017, with an additional Scoping Report specifically regarding the emerging Gypsy and Travellers Development Plan Document (DPD) approved in 2018. It is important to ensure that the Scoping Reports remain up to date, taking account of changing baseline information. With this in mind, it is intended to replace both of the approved Scoping Reports.

2 Background

- 2.1 There is currently a statutory requirement, through the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended), that an appraisal of the sustainability of Development Plan Documents is carried out. This process is designed to ensure that plans and policies contribute to the overall objective of achieving sustainable development. Furthermore, there are requirements through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 to undertake an assessment of plans and programmes that are likely to have a significant effect. The sustainability appraisal process is designed to cover the requirements of both pieces of legislation.

- 2.2 National guidance on sustainability appraisals identifies five broad stages that need to be undertaken. The first of these comprises setting the context, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope – this is delivered through a Scoping Report.
- 2.3 The main output of the Scoping Report is the identification of sustainability objectives within a ‘sustainability appraisal framework’. This is utilised in later stages of the sustainability appraisal process, including the assessment of alternative options considered in plan preparation. The Scoping Report itself does not make any decisions on policy, instead provides a framework for considering their sustainability.
- 2.4 The ‘Planning for the Future’ White Paper proposes removing the requirement for sustainability appraisals. This is currently a consultation document, the outcomes of which and timescales for potential implementation are unknown. Therefore, at this stage there remains a requirement for the preparation of sustainability appraisals.
- 2.5 In addition, it has been announced that the Government intends to consult on changes to environmental assessment processes this autumn. This could link to the requirements of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. Again, the outcome of this process and timescales for potential implementation are unknown.

3 Corporate Objectives and Priorities

- 3.1 The Scoping Report, as part of the sustainability appraisal process, will help to ensure that future planning policy for the Borough contributes to delivering sustainable development – this includes environmental, social and economic factors.
- 3.2 There is currently a legal requirement to undertake sustainability appraisals as part of the preparation of local plans. Therefore, through aiding the preparation of planning policy documents, there are links to all four priorities in the Corporate Plan.

4 Consultation and Communication

- 4.1 There is a requirement to consult on the scope of the sustainability appraisal process for at least 5 weeks through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. This legislation only requires consultation with the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England, however the Council notified more organisations than required (including all parish councils within the Borough).
- 4.2 In addition to specifically advising a range of organisations of the consultation, advance notification of a consultation on the Scoping Report was included as part of the letters / emails distributed for the refined issues and options consultation for the next Local Plan. A post on Facebook highlighted the consultation and the availability of all documents on the Council’s website.

- 4.3 Consultation was undertaken on the draft Scoping Report between 24 July and 4 September 2020, for a period of 6 weeks.
- 4.4 Through the consultation 8 responses were received. These responses are summarised in Appendix 1 of the Scoping Report, along with officer responses to the comments made. This has resulted in some changes to the Scoping Report, including additions to the sustainability issues identified, amendments to the sustainability appraisal framework, and updates to a number of topics within the baseline.
- 4.5 The opportunity has also been taken to update aspects of the Scoping Report where new information has become available. This includes reference to additional plans, policies and programmes (including adding references to the masterplans for Andover town centre and Romsey south of the town centre, and the recently approved Playing Pitch and Sport Facilities Strategies) and updated data sources (such as on renewable energy generation, vacancy rates in the town centres, and including a data on personal wellbeing).

5 Options

- 5.1 Having undertaken consultation on the draft Scoping Report, the options available relate to whether or not to approve the Scoping Report. If a decision was made not to approve this Scoping Report, the documents from 2017 and 2018 would remain in place.

6 Option Appraisal

- 6.1 The preferred option is to approve the Scoping Report as appended to this report, which has been prepared having regard to legal requirements and national guidance, including the completion of the required consultation.
- 6.2 If this option is not progressed, it would result in continued reliance, at least in the short term, on the 2017 and 2018 Scoping Reports, which are becoming increasingly out of date (e.g. in terms of the baseline data they draw on). This potentially results in a risk to the outcomes of the sustainability appraisal process.
- 6.3 If a decision was taken to undertake a further review process, leading to a requirement for an additional consultation, this could have implications for the timescales for the preparation of the next Local Plan. The Scoping Report, and particularly the identification of the sustainability objectives, feed into the sustainability appraisal of local plan documents, which is undertaken alongside the preparation of emerging plans.
- 6.4 It is recognised that proposals to abolish sustainability appraisals are currently being consulted on, with a consultation on changes to environmental assessment processes anticipated this year. As the timescales for the outcome of these consultations (and subsequent implementation of any changes) are not yet known, this could also have implications for the preparation of the next Local Plan if the approval of the Scoping Report is deferred.

6.5 It would remain appropriate to keep the content of the Scoping Report under review to ensure it remains up to date and in accordance with the necessary legislation and guidance.

7 Risk Management

7.1 An evaluation of the risks indicate that the existing controls in place mean that no significant risks have been identified at this time.

8 Resource Implications

8.1 The preparation of this Scoping Report has been undertaken in-house using existing resources.

9 Legal Implications

9.1 There is currently a statutory requirement to undertake sustainability appraisals (which includes the scoping stage) of Development Plan Documents (DPDs). A Scoping Report that has been prepared in line with the statutory processes will aid in the preparation of 'sound' and legally compliant plans.

10 Equality Issues

10.1 The EQIA has not identified any potential for discrimination or adverse impact and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken.

11 Other Issues

11.1 Community Safety – no issues arising.

11.2 Environmental Health Issues – no issues arising.

11.3 Sustainability and Addressing a Changing Climate - as noted above, the sustainability appraisal process is designed to support the production of planning policy documents that promote sustainable development. The consideration of risks and implications of a changing climate are incorporated in the Scoping Report.

11.4 Property Issues – no issues arising.

11.5 Wards/Communities Affected – all Wards are covered within the Scoping Report.

12 Conclusion and reasons for recommendation

12.1 It is recommended that the Scoping Report (including associated appendices and summary document) is approved so as to ensure that it is robust and up to date and thus will better inform the sustainability appraisal for future planning policy documents.

Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Reports (2017 & 2018)

Confidentiality

It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.

No of Annexes:	3	File Ref:	pp1.4
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(Portfolio: Planning) Councillor N Adams-King

Officer:	Karen Eastley	Ext:	8258
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Report to:	Cabinet	Date:	4 November 2020
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