

SOUTH LAKELAND DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK CORE STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT

Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment Adoption Statement

South Lakeland District Council adopted its Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) with effect from 20th October 2010.

This statement has been prepared in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (16) (3) and (4), which require that a statement be produced on adoption of a plan or programme to show:

- How environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme;
- How the environmental report has been taken into account;
- How opinions expressed and results of public consultation have been taken into account;
- The reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with;
- The measures that are taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan or programme.

Planning Policy Statement 12 widens these considerations from environmental, to broader sustainability issues, as such this statement provides information on the wider sustainability appraisal process, which incorporated Strategic Environmental Assessment.

1. How environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme

An integral part of the process of preparing the Core Strategy has been to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) to ensure the integration of social, environmental and economic considerations into the development of the Core Strategy objectives and strategic policies. In undertaking the SA the requirements of EU Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment and the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 have been incorporated into the SA.

The SA commenced during the pre-production and evidence gathering stage, with an informal SA of the Issues and Options and the SA Scoping report. SA was undertaken in accordance with the SA Scoping report throughout. However, the Scoping Report was revised and updated to take account of new information at each stage of the preparation of the Core Strategy. At each stage, options and objectives have been tested against the SA framework to predict and evaluate the effects of the Core Strategy, ways of mitigating adverse effects and maximising beneficial effects, and measures proposed to improve the sustainability of options as the Core Strategy evolved. A SA Report was published at Preferred Options stage and an addendum to this was submitted alongside the Core Strategy. Further SA work was undertaken to account for changes made in accordance with the Inspector's recommendations and these are recorded in the Core Strategy Inspectors Possible Changes - SA Addendum (June 2010).

The methodology used to undertake the SA was considered by the Inspector and found to satisfy the relevant soundness test.

2. How the environmental report has been taken into account

Issues and Options

The Issues and Options Report presented a number of options and reasonable alternatives on the spatial strategy to be pursued, as well as looking at alternatives for community priorities, sustainable development principles, main issues to be resolved, development emphases, how the District relates to neighbouring areas and potential major projects. The Issues and Options SA tested the spatial strategy alternatives and sustainable development principles against a framework of sustainability objectives. The results indicated that balanced distribution should be pursued in the Preferred Options Report. Appendix 3 of the Core Strategy Preferred Options SA document sets out how the initial informal SA influenced the Issues and Options document and the approach to SA.

Preferred Options

The Core Strategy Preferred Options SA report was published alongside the Core Strategy Preferred Options document for public consultation in April 2008. The preferred options were appraised against the sustainability objectives; a process which provided information on their possible economic, social and environmental impacts. The appraisal considered whether the impact was considered likely to be strong positive, weak positive, strong negative, weak negative, neutral or uncertain. The potential cumulative, synergistic and secondary impacts and the likely timescales and geographical scales of the proposed policies on the sustainability objectives were also assessed. Recommendations were made as to potential mitigation measures where negative scores occurred, and suggestions were made where there appeared to be scope to make options that achieved positive scores even more sustainable. Each section of the Preferred Options document includes a sub-section on how the options within that section scored in the SA. Reports to Council and Cabinet meetings also set out how the findings of the SA fed into the preparation of the Submission Core Strategy.

Submission Draft

The Core Strategy was submitted in November 2009. Alongside this were the Preferred Options SA document and the Submission Core Strategy SA Addendum, which detailed the results of SA work undertaken on the changes made to the Core Strategy in between Preferred Options and Submission stages. Each section of the Submission and Final Core Strategy documents includes a sub-section on the main findings of the SA in relation to that section. Further SA work was undertaken on the Inspectors proposed changes to the document following Examination in Public and these are recorded in Core Strategy Inspectors Possible Changes - SA Addendum (June 2010).

3. How opinions expressed and results of public consultation have been taken into account

Article 5.4 of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive requires consultation with authorities with environmental responsibilities when deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information to be included in the environmental report (SA report). The required consultees at the time were the Environment Agency, English Heritage, English Nature and The Countryside Agency; in addition responses were sought from a range of other organisations including Cumbria County Council the North West Development Agency and Cumbria Wildlife Trust. Comments received helped to inform the methodology and scope for the SA and many of the organisations sat on an 'SA panel' set up by the Council to undertake the SA scoring.

Details of those consulted on the methodology and scope of the SA are set out in Appendix 8 of the Core Strategy Preferred Options SA report. Nineteen responses were

received. A number of minor changes were made to the SA methodology and scope of the SA as a result of the initial informal SA work and formal consultation on the SA Scoping report.

Issues and Options Consultation

The results of the initial informal appraisal of the Issues and Options and the Issues and Options SA Scoping report was published for consultation alongside the Core Strategy Issues and Options during December 2005.

Preferred Options Consultation

The Preferred Options SA report was published for consultation alongside the Preferred Options In April 2008. Five consultation responses were received; these are available to view on the LDF consultation database.

Submission Consultation

The Submission Core Strategy SA Addendum was published alongside the submission Core Strategy for consultation in August 2009. No comments were received on the Final SA.

4. The reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with

In preparing the Core Strategy, a range of approaches to addressing the key planning issues facing South Lakeland were considered. This statement sets out the reasons for choosing the approach of the plan as adopted in the light of the other reasonable alternatives. A number of alternative approaches were set out in the Issues and Options and Preferred Options documents. Section 6 of the Issues and Options document and Section 7 of the Core Strategy Preferred Options SA set out detailed consideration of the reasonable alternatives considered at each stage.

At Issues and Options stage, the Sustainability Appraisal clearly indicated that a balanced spatial strategy, focusing growth in Key Service Centres and the 17 Local Service Centres with the greatest level of services was the most sustainable compared to alternatives where growth was either even more focused, with little scope for development outside Key Services Centres, except for in 8 Local Service Centres or more distributed, with development spread across the 5 Key Service centres and 37 Local Service Centres.

Having determined the most sustainable approach to the distribution of development, at Preferred Options stage, several options were considered under each topic area. The economic, social and environmental effects of the options were taken into account and the preferred options tended to combine the most sustainable components of more than one option. These Preferred Options went on to form the basis of the final policies in the Submission Core Strategy.

The Core Strategy, as adopted, has been found sound following examination by an independent Inspector and represents a sustainable approach to key planning issues in the District up to 2025.

5. The measures that are taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan or programme

Appendix 1 of the Core Strategy contains a series of performance objectives, indicators and targets by which the policies in the Core Strategy will be monitored. Appendix 1 also includes an implementation plan, setting out by policy the implementation mechanism and responsible agencies.

The Annual Monitoring Report will be the main mechanism for assessing the performance of the Core Strategy, including any significant environmental effects. This will help to ensure that objectives are being met and that policies are being implemented. Where, as a result of monitoring, indicators show that a policy is not working effectively or key targets and objectives are not being met, remedial action may be taken.

The documents referred to in this statement can be viewed at

<http://www.southlakeland.gov.uk/services/environment-and-planning/planning/local-development-framework/core-strategy.aspx>