



South Cambridgeshire Local Plan  
Submission

Sustainability Appraisal Report  
Part 1: Introduction

Prepared for:  
**South Cambridgeshire District Council**

Prepared by:  
**ENVIRON**  
Exeter, UK

Date:  
**March 2014**

Project or Issue Number:  
**UK1818630**

Contract No:	UK1818630
Issue:	3
Author (signature):	Emma Jones / Victoria Tanner Tremaine 
Project Manager/Director (signature):	Johanna Curran 
Date:	March 2014

*This report has been prepared by ENVIRON with all reasonable skill, care and diligence, and taking account of the Services and the Terms agreed between ENVIRON and the Client. This report is confidential to the client, and ENVIRON accepts no responsibility whatsoever to third parties to whom this report, or any part thereof, is made known, unless formally agreed by ENVIRON beforehand. Any such party relies upon the report at their own risk.*

*ENVIRON disclaims any responsibility to the Client and others in respect of any matters outside the agreed scope of the Services.*

<b>Version Control Record</b>				
<b>Issue</b>	<b>Description of Status</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Reviewer Initials</b>	<b>Author Initials</b>
2	Final for Consultation with Local Plan Submission Draft	10/07/13	LV	EJ/VTT
3	Submission SA	14/03/14	LV	EJ/VTT

## Contents

1	Introduction	1-1
1.1	This Sustainability Appraisal Report	1-1
1.2	Sustainability Appraisal	1-1
1.3	Who carried out the SA?	1-4
1.4	Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)	1-4
2	The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan	1-6
2.1	The Current Position	1-6
2.2	The Need to Review	1-6
2.3	Content and objectives of the Local Plan	1-7

## List of Tables

Table 1.1: Contents of the SA Report	1-2
--------------------------------------	-----

## List of Figures

Box 1.1: Objectives of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan	1-8
--	-----

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 This Sustainability Appraisal Report

This Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Report is the main report of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan and consists of three parts as follows:

- **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan – SA Report - Part 1: Introduction**, setting the context for the SA, providing an outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan and identifying where the requirements of the SEA Regulations<sup>1</sup> have been met in the SA Report;
- **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan – SA Report - Part 2: Scoping Report**, setting out the scope of the SA, baseline data, the sustainability objectives and targets of relevant other documents, key sustainability issues and the assessment framework to be used to assess the Local Plan; and
- **South Cambridgeshire Local Plan – SA Report - Part 3: Results of the SA and Proposed Monitoring Strategy**, setting out the assessment methodology, the findings of the SA of the Local Plan Submission Draft and reasonable alternatives, identifying the significant environmental effects of the Local Plan and proposing a strategy for monitoring significant effects. The Part also includes an Addendum setting out the assessment of the major changes to the Local Plan between the submission draft and this stage of submission. This includes the SA of a new section to policy H/1, under Chapter 7 Delivering High Quality Homes, covering Parish Council Led Allocations for Residential Development in Villages, and four new site specific allocations made under this policy.

There is also a separate Non-Technical Summary which summarises the information provided in these three Parts. All the SA documents are available on the Council's website here: [www.scambs.gov.uk/localplan](http://www.scambs.gov.uk/localplan).

## 1.2 Sustainability Appraisal

The Local Plan has been subject to an assessment which complies with the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the SEA Regulations (Statutory Instrument 2004 No. 1633: The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004). This SA Report includes the required elements of an Environmental Report as required by the SEA Regulations.

The purpose of SA is to ensure that potential sustainability effects of plans are addressed through assessing sustainability impacts of objectives, actions, policies and their alternatives at an early stage in plan preparation.

Although local authorities aim to address these issues in Local Plans, it is easy to miss opportunities for better supporting sustainability objectives, and for reducing conflicts. SA offers a systematic and robust way for checking and improving on plans as they are being developed. Ideally, as a result of the assessment, conflicts with sustainability objectives will be removed, but this is not always possible. The conflicts and the decisions made must be

---

<sup>1</sup> Statutory Instrument 2004 No. 1633: The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

explained within the SA reports. As a result the public and other stakeholders will find it easier to appreciate the pros and cons of the plan and to make up their own minds about whether the authority has made good decisions.

The SEA Regulations require that at some point in the drafting of the plan an assessment is carried out on a draft version of the plan and a statutory Environmental Report is produced and consulted on. This report is the statutory Environmental Report (called an SA report in this case) and it reports on the assessment of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan. This SA Report has been produced alongside the production and publication of the Local Plan Submission Draft and will be published at the same time. In this way, respondents are given the greatest amount of sustainability information on which to base their representations on the Local Plan.

This SA Report includes the elements required by the SEA Regulations. Table 1.1 signposts the relevant sections of this SA Report that represent the required contents of the statutory Environmental Report.

<b>Table 1.1: Contents of the SA Report</b>	
<b>SEA Directive and SEA Regulations – requirement for an environmental report</b>	<b>Where covered in the SA Report</b>
Preparation of an environmental report in which the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme, and reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan or programme, are identified, described and evaluated.	Parts 1 to 3 and the Appendices accompanying including the SA Addendum to Part 3, and the separately bound Annex A comprise the 'environmental report' for the Local Plan Submission version.
An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme, and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes.	Part 1: Introduction. Section 2 (this document).
The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme and the environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected.	Part 2: Scoping Report, Section 6, and the topic Appendices 1-12 and Appendix 13 which sets out the characteristics of the European sites designated under Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC.
Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC.	Part 2: Scoping Report, Section 6, and the topic Appendices 1-12 and Appendix 13 which sets out information on European sites designated under Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC. The separate Habitats Regulations Assessment Report also sets out updated information on the European sites, including their current condition and environmental problems potentially affecting their ecological integrity.
The environmental protection objectives, established at international, community or national level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation.	Part 2: Scoping Report, Section 6, and the topic Appendices 1-12, and Appendix 13 and the separate Habitats Regulations Assessment Report which sets out information on the conservation objectives of European sites designated under Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC.

<b>Table 1.1: Contents of the SA Report</b>	
<b>SEA Directive and SEA Regulations – requirement for an environmental report</b>	<b>Where covered in the SA Report</b>
The likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors. (Footnote: These effects should include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects).	Part 3: SA Report - Part 3: Results of the SA and Proposed Monitoring Strategy and the SA Addendum to Part 3. Details are provided in the accompanying assessment Appendices.
The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme.	Part 3: SA Report - Part 3: Results of the SA and Proposed Monitoring Strategy, with details in the accompanying assessment Appendices 5 and 6.
An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information.	Part 3: Results of the SA and Proposed Monitoring Strategy. Details of the assessment are in the Appendices 1, 4, 5 and 6 to Part 3. Difficulties encountered are set out in Section 2.7 of Part 3.  The separately bound Annex A outlines the Council's reasons for choosing the alternatives.
A description of measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Directive Article 10 and Regulation 17	Part 3: Results of the SA and Proposed Monitoring Strategy.
A non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings.	See the separate Non-Technical Summary.
The report shall include the information that may reasonably be required taking into account current knowledge and methods of assessment, the contents and level of detail in the plan or programme, its stage in the decision-making process and the extent to which certain matters are more appropriately assessed at different levels in that process to avoid duplication of the assessment (Directive Article 5.2 and Regulation 12(3)).	Parts 1, 2 and 3 of the SA Report (and the accompanying Appendices and Annexes) do this.  The methodology for SEA Stage A (Scoping) for the SA is set out in Part 2 of this SA Report. The methodology for Stages B to E of the SEA are set out in Part 3 of the SA Report.  The content and level of detail in the Local Plan is covered in Part 1 of the SA Report.  The extents to which certain matters are more appropriately assessed at different levels in the decision-making process are discussed in Part 3 of the SA Report, where appropriate.
Consultation Authorities with environmental responsibility and the public shall be given an early and effective opportunity within appropriate time frames to express their opinion on the draft plan or programme and the accompanying environmental report before the adoption of the plan or programme (Directive Art. 6.1, 6.2 and Regulation	Consultation undertaken to date on the SA process is summarised in the SA Report Part 3, Section 2.6  The SA and the Draft Local Plan has been subject to public consultation and consultation with the environmental authorities throughout the plan-making process. The consultation undertaken to date on the SA process is summarised in Part 3 of

<b>Table 1.1: Contents of the SA Report</b>	
<b>SEA Directive and SEA Regulations – requirement for an environmental report</b>	<b>Where covered in the SA Report</b>
13).	the SA Report in Section 2.6.

### 1.3 Who carried out the SA?

The early stages of the SA (including the scoping stage and most of the assessment of issues and options, including sites) were carried out by South Cambridgeshire District Council. Independent consultants ENVIRON took over the SA process at the Proposed Submission Draft stage, and has continued to work collaboratively with the Council on the SA process and SA Report.

### 1.4 Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

HRA is required under the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010,<sup>2</sup> as amended<sup>3</sup> for any proposed plan or project which may have a significant effect on one or more European designated sites.

European sites are Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). Proposed sites awaiting approval – potential SPAs (pSPAs) and candidate SACs (cSACs) should be treated in the same way as those already classified and approved. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (March 2012) also states that that Ramsar sites should be afforded the same level of consideration as SPAs and SACs, in policy if not in law. All (non-marine) SPAs, SACs and Ramsar sites overlap to some degree with Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). HRA relates specifically and exclusively to the qualifying interests of European sites and not to the broader conservation interests or requirements under other SSSIs. However, the latter should be factored into plan-making as part of the SEA / SA process and the planning authority's duty under section 28G of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to conserve and enhance SSSIs in carrying out their functions.

It should be noted that the presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 14 of the NPPF) does not apply where development requiring appropriate assessment under the Birds or Habitats Directives is being considered, planned or determined.

The purpose of HRA is to determine whether or not significant effects are likely and to suggest ways in which they could be avoided.

The Local Plan has been subject to a HRA screening process to identify whether it could result in Likely Significant Effects (LSEs) on the conservation objectives of any European designated sites. The objectives of HRA screening are to:

- Identify the European sites which could potentially be affected by a plan;
- Identify the potential risks of effects on European sites (including potential for in-combination effects); and

<sup>2</sup> Statutory Instrument 2010/490.

<sup>3</sup> By the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) Regulations 2012, Statutory Instrument 2012/1927.

- Identify any recommended measures by which potential effects can be avoided in the development of the plan.

#### **1.4.1 HRA screening results**

The initial draft screening (May 2013) considered that there was no likelihood of significant effects, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, on the identified European sites as a consequence of the policies and allocations as worded in the Submission Draft Local Plan. At that stage, therefore, no policies required advancement to appropriate assessment. In February 2014, the proposed modifications to the Proposed Submission Local Plan version were screened. In addition to minor editorial changes to the plan, which could be screened out of the HRA, the proposed changes included an additional sub-section to Policy H/1 Residential Development at Villages and allocated three small sites for small scale residential development in Great and Little Abington, and one site in Graveley. The screening concluded that there are no likely significant effects from the Local Plan either alone or in combination with other reasonably foreseeable plans and projects on the identified European sites.

The HRA screening is reported on separately and can be downloaded from the Council's website here: [www.scambs.gov.uk/localplan](http://www.scambs.gov.uk/localplan).

## 2 The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan

### 2.1 The Current Position

South Cambridgeshire District Council has adopted three district-wide Development Plan Documents (DPD) that form part of its Local Development Framework (LDF). They are as follows:

- Core Strategy DPD (adopted January 2007);
- Development Control Policies DPD (adopted July 2007); and
- Site Specific Policies DPD (adopted January 2010).

There are also a number of Area Action Plans (AAP) for major developments which have DPD status and which include policies specific to the development of these parts of the district. The adopted AAPs are as follows -

- Northstowe AAP (adopted July 2007);
- Cambridge Southern Fringe AAP (adopted February 2008);
- Cambridge East AAP (adopted February 2008, joint plan with Cambridge City Council); and
- North West Cambridge AAP (adopted October 2009, joint plan with Cambridge City Council).

There is a single saved policy remaining from the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 (Policy CNF6) which identifies an area on Chesterton Fen Road Cambridge as suitable for further Gypsy and Traveller site provision.

The development strategy included in these adopted plans takes a sequential approach to locating development to meet the needs of the Cambridge Sub-Region and is set out in Policy ST/2. The order of preference for the location of development within South Cambridgeshire is as follows:

- On the edge of Cambridge;
- At the new town of Northstowe; and
- In the rural area in Rural Centres and other villages.

### 2.2 The Need to Review

The adopted Core Strategy currently runs to March 2016, albeit that the adopted Area Action Plans for major new developments at Northstowe and on the edge of Cambridge do include substantial development provision beyond 2016. The Council need to carry out the review of its Core Strategy and Site Specific Policies DPDs in order to be able to demonstrate a 15-year supply of deliverable housing land.

In addition, there have been a number of changes in recent years that have resulted in the need to review these plans. These changes are discussed below.

#### 2.2.1 Changes in the economic climate

There has been a global recession that has impacted on the economy of the Cambridge Sub-region resulting in a slowing down of all development. The rate at which it was expected that development would proceed in the district has been less than planned for in

the Core Strategy. This has particularly impacted on the larger housing schemes such as the new settlement of Northstowe where the originally anticipated start date has been delayed. Economic policies need to be reviewed in light of evidence regarding the economic downturn and the changing needs of the Cambridge Area economy to ensure they continue to support the success of the area.

### **2.2.2 Changes in local circumstances**

Cambridge East Area Action Plan plans for a large development on the site of the Cambridge airport and was produced jointly with Cambridge City Council. The owners of the land – Marshalls, have now indicated that they will not in the foreseeable future be moving from the site. This has resulted in a need to find additional housing allocations to pick up the housing numbers that were allocated for this development and has highlighted the need to review the Core Strategy DPD.

### **2.2.3 Changes in planning policy guidance at both national and regional level**

In May 2010 the new Coalition Government announced its intention to carry out a major review of planning within the United Kingdom and that all regional plans were to be revoked. Housing targets would no longer be set within regional plans – top down - but were to be decided at a local level. The Localism Act 2011 included many changes to planning including the intention to abolish regional plans, the duty to cooperate between local authorities on joint planning issues and the introduction of a new tier of planning – neighbourhood plans.

In March 2012 the Government published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), a key part of their reforms to make the planning system less complex and more accessible and to promote sustainable growth. The NPPF replaced Planning Policy Guidance Notes and Planning Policy Statements.

This combination of changes has resulted in the need to review the adopted DPDs and also the AAPs where appropriate. It has been decided by South Cambridgeshire District Council that, in light of the Government's desire to simplify planning, the review of all these adopted documents should be incorporated into one plan – the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan. The new plan will cover a period up to 2031.

The new South Cambridgeshire Local Plan will address a range of issues and will review the existing development strategy and policies contained in the adopted Core Strategy, Development Control Policies, and Site Specific Policies Development Plan Documents in light of the changes as set out above.

## **2.3 Content and objectives of the Local Plan**

The Local Plan establishes a Vision for the district, that:

*'South Cambridgeshire will continue to be the best place to live, work and study in the country. Our district will demonstrate impressive and sustainable economic growth. Our residents will have a superb quality of life in an exceptionally beautiful, rural and green environment.'*

It then establishes a set of objectives for the plan to deliver this vision. The objectives of the Local Plan are presented in Box 1.1 below.

**Box 1.1: Objectives of the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan**

- A. To support economic growth by supporting South Cambridgeshire's position as a world leader in research and technology based industries, research, and education; and supporting the rural economy.
- B. To protect the character of South Cambridgeshire, including its built and natural heritage, as well as protecting the Cambridge Green Belt. New development should enhance the area, and protect and enhance biodiversity.
- C. To provide land for housing in sustainable locations that meets local needs and aspirations, and gives choice about type, size, tenure and cost.
- D. To deliver new developments that are high quality and well-designed with distinctive character that reflects their location, and which responds robustly to the challenges of climate change.
- E. To ensure that all new development provides or has access to a range of services and facilities that support healthy lifestyles and well-being for everyone, including shops, schools, doctors, community buildings, cultural facilities, local open space, and green infrastructure.
- F. To maximise potential for journeys to be undertaken by sustainable modes of transport including walking, cycling, bus and train.

The Local Plan sets the levels of employment and housing development that should be provided over the plan period to best meet the needs of the area and establish a clear strategy for meeting development needs in the most sustainable way that protects the quality of life of existing and future residents. Its policies aim to ensure that development is of high quality and will meet the challenges we face with an ageing population and changing climate. It will ensure that new development comes with the necessary schools, health facilities, shops, leisure facilities and open spaces that residents need to provide a good quality of life.

The Local Plan includes the following chapters:

**Chapter 1** is the introduction which describes the overall purpose of the document.

**Chapter 2** sets out the vision and objectives and development needs for South Cambridgeshire to 2031 together with the spatial strategy which focuses development on the edge of Cambridge, at new towns/new villages; and in selected villages. It also has policies for small scale development in villages. It includes a policy about phasing, delivering and monitoring of the plan to ensure that it continues to meet its objectives.

**Chapter 3** contains the strategic sites which will contribute most to the delivery of sustainable development in South Cambridgeshire.

**Chapter 4** is concerned with sustainable development, climate change, water resources and flooding.

**Chapter 5** is concerned with design, landscape, and public realm.

**Chapter 6** contains proposals to protect and enhance the historic built and the natural environment.

**Chapter 7** is concerned with delivering high quality housing and includes village housing sites.

**Chapter 8** deals with building a strong and competitive economy, including sections on employment, retail and tourism and development sites.

**Chapter 9** is concerned with creating successful communities, including the provision of open space, leisure facilities and community facilities.

**Chapter 10** deals with promoting and delivering sustainable transport and other kinds of infrastructure.

The South Cambridgeshire Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2007, Development Control Policies 2007, Site Specific Policies DPD 2010 and saved policy CNF6 from the South Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2004 will be revoked (deleted) in their entirety and will no longer form part of the development plan. The Local Plan also proposes to replace specific policies in the Cambridge East Area Action Plan and the Northstowe Area Action Plan.