

Appraisal methodology

The adopted approach

This Sustainability Appraisal report has followed the approach set out in government guidance 'Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents' (DCLG, 2005). The appraisal has also been carried out to ensure that the requirements of the SEA Directive have been met, in accordance with 'The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004' (Statutory Instrument 2004 No 1633).

The sustainability appraisal and LDF processes have been closely linked throughout their preparation. Table 2 below shows the stages and tasks associated with the sustainability appraisal process, and their relationship with the preparation of the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD). Stages A-E as shown below, are discussed throughout the remainder of this report.

DPD Stage	SA stages and tasks
Stage 1: Pre-production - Evidence Gathering	A: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope A1 - Identify other relevant plans, programmes and sustainability objectives A2 - Collect baseline information A3 - Identify sustainability issues and problems A4 - Develop the Sustainability Appraisal framework A5 - Consult on the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal
Stage 2: Production	B: Developing and refining options B1 - Test the DPD objectives against the SA Framework B2 - Develop the DPD options B3 - Predict the effects of the DPD B4 - Evaluate the effects of the DPD B5 - Consider ways of mitigating adverse effects and maximising beneficial effects B6 - Propose measures to monitor the significant effects of implementing the DPD
	C: Prepare the Sustainability Appraisal Report C1 - Prepare the SA report
	D: Consult on the preferred options of the DPD and SA report D1 - Public participation on the preferred options of the DPD and the SA Report D2(i) - Appraise significant changes

Stage 3: Examination	D2(ii) – Appraising significant changes resulting from representations
Stage 4 - Adoption and monitoring	D3 - Make decisions and provide information
	E: Monitor the significant effects of implementing the DPD E1 - Finalise aims and methods for monitoring E2 - Respond to adverse effects

Table 1: Links between SA and LDF development (based on DCLG guidance, 2005)

This Sustainability Appraisal report will consider the implications of the Core Strategy DPD from a social, environmental and economic perspective, by assessing options and the draft DPD against available baseline and sustainability objectives. It will set out the results of the appraisal and recommendations for amendments to policies and the selection of preferred options

The SA/SEA Scoping Report

The DCLG guidance recommends the preparation of a scoping report to set out the initial context and findings of the sustainability appraisal for the LDF, and the proposed approach for the remainder of the process. The Scoping Report set out an initial assessment of:

- The relationship of the LDF with other relevant plans and programmes
- Relevant sustainability objectives established, at the national, regional, county or local level
- The current environmental, social and economic baseline and likely evolution thereof
- The characteristics of the area which are most likely to be affected by the LDF
- The likely key sustainability issues within Hastings

The report also set out the proposed methodology for the sustainability appraisal, including suggested sustainability objectives and criteria.

The statutory environmental bodies were consulted on the Scoping Report between 12th September and 14th October 2005. Further information on the comments made and how they were incorporated into the revised version can be found in Appendix 4 of that report, available to view or download from our website at www.hastings.gov.uk/ldf.

When, and who carried out the Sustainability Appraisal?

The Council's Sustainability Officer, in consultation with planning officers and other key stakeholders, carried out the scoping stage of the sustainability appraisal.

The Council's Sustainability Officer and Senior Planner continued to develop the Sustainability Appraisal report throughout the development of the Core Strategy Issues and Options, and Preferred Approaches documents.

Who was consulted, when and how

The SEA Directive requires us to:

“Consult responsible environmental authorities when deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information which must be included in the environmental report” (Article 5.4)

A workshop was held in July 2005 with local organisations and statutory consultees to help develop the sustainability appraisal framework, and to discuss the key sustainability issues that face the town. The Scoping Report was revised following consultation with the statutory consultees in December 2006, and has since been updated to reflect new and updated guidance and up to date baseline information.

The assessment stage of the Core Strategy Issues and Options document was also done in consultation with various internal and external stakeholders by way of themed workshops, held during February and March 2007. Notes from each of the sessions, displaying the names of persons involved, are available by contacting Forward Planning at fplanning@hastings.gov.uk, or 0845 2741098.

Difficulties encountered in compiling information or carrying out the assessment

The appraisal of the Core Strategy has been undertaken using the most accurate information available. However appraisal of policies is rarely straightforward, and the outcome may include some levels of uncertainty. Key issues that need to be taken into account when considering the results of the appraisal are as follows:

- The Core Strategy Issues and Options document did not set out options that could clearly be appraised against each other in all cases. It was therefore difficult to make a direct comparison as to the most sustainable option.
- Uncertainties with data – variability in data and collection measures exists, particularly if relying on external sources
- Lack of precision – environmental, social and economic issues can be difficult to quantify or measure with a high degree of accuracy
- Implementation of policies/approaches – with a high level strategy, such as the Core Strategy, it is difficult to assess the exact effects in a high level of detail, resulting in a number of uncertain effects.

Research and professional judgement can help to reduce the levels of uncertainty, but only to a certain extent. In response to this, the appraisal has taken very much a ‘precautionary approach’, looking to highlight all areas of potential conflict.