

BABERGH LOCAL PLAN ALTERATION NO. 2

SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

TOPIC PAPER

JULY 2004

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In accordance with government guidance sustainability appraisal has been used by Babergh District Council as part of the process to develop these proposed alterations to the Local Plan.
- 1.2 In August 2001 Suffolk Local Planning Authorities adopted a common methodology or approach to sustainability appraisal of Development Plans: objectives, policies and proposals. This jointly agreed approach has been used to evaluate the proposed alterations to the plan. Suffolk's Guidance Note on Development Plan Appraisal is a core document called: "Suffolk's Environment, A Methodology for Sustainability Appraisal of Development Plans: Objectives, Policies and Proposals".

2. OUTLINE OF THE METHODOLOGY USED

- 2.1 For the second deposit draft of the Babergh Local Plan Alteration No. 2 a panel has overseen the sustainability appraisal process. This panel has included Council Officers from the Planning Policy, Environmental Services and other Divisions, with specialist advice from the Suffolk Wildlife Trust and the Environment Agency. The Suffolk Wildlife Trust have advised on nature and biodiversity issues while the Environment Agency have dealt with a range of water conservation and flood related issues. This process has produced a more robust sustainability appraisal.
- 2.2 Policies and proposals have been appraised against 19 criteria which are called stock criteria. These criteria are attached as Appendix 1. This appraisal has been over five stages which are:-

Stage One: Identify Policy / Proposal requiring approval

Stage Two General Description of Intent of Policy.

Stage Three: Alternative Policy Intents.

Stage Four: Assess Impact of Policy/Proposal Using Policy Impact Matrix.

Stage Five: Conclusions

3. HOW THE SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL WAS USED

- 3.1 A Task Group of Officers and elected Members has supervised the development of the second alteration to the Local Plan and the Sustainability Appraisal results were reported to the Task Group.

Other consultees also gave their comments on the proposals or policies (such as the Parish Councils and Highway Authority) and after considering these the Local Plan Task Group decided on the way the plan should proceed.

- 3.2 At the same time as the second deposit draft for the second alteration to the Local Plan was produced a report was published with the Sustainability Appraisal of Policies and Proposals

in May 2003. Many sites were considered for inclusion in the plan but have been rejected, other sites have been put forward by objectors to the Local Plan Review and are still before the Inspector for his consideration. The sustainability appraisal of the alternative or “omission” sites are now published in a new document to assist the public and the Inspector in considering these sites.

SUSTAINABILITY STOCK CRITERIA

The following nineteen stock criteria have been selected for use in assessing the impact of the policies and proposals within the Babergh Local Plan Alteration No. 2. The majority related to aspects of the environment, economy and communities that can be quantified although adequate data may not be available in all instances.

TRANSPORT: TRIPS

Concerned with the numbers and lengths of trips made.

Each policy should be evaluated as to whether implementation will create a situation where longer or shorter trips become necessary or where segregation of land uses is increased or decreased.

Does the policy reduce the need to travel?

Does the policy seek to minimise trip generation?

TRANSPORT: MODES

Concerned with the modal split of travel such as that made by car, foot, bike, bus and train.

Each policy should be evaluated as to whether implementation will reduce or increase car reliance, or whether it improves personal choice for alternative means of travel by public transport, cycling or walking.

Does this policy increase opportunities for using alternatives to car transport?

BIODIVERSITY

Concerned with habitats and species richness. This includes designated sites and more general ecological considerations.

Each policy should be evaluated as to whether implementation will damage or protect existing habitats, enhance wildlife potential, or create new habitats and general wildlife diffusion.

Does this policy cause a decline in the ecological interest of the Development Plan area?

Does this policy provide opportunities for habitat creation or improvement?

LANDSCAPE

Concerned with the appearance and character of the countryside.

The designated areas, for example, AONB and Special Landscape Areas are of particular significance but the landscape quality of the Development Plan area as a whole should be considered and protected “for its own sake”. In this context, the open countryside, even where not of a particularly high visual / environmental quality, should in general, be safeguarded.

Each policy should be evaluated as to whether implementation will protect, enhance, create or damage landscapes.

Does the policy safeguard areas of value or provide for landscape improvement?

TOWNSCAPE

Concerned with the visual appearance of settlements, both towns and villages.

Each policy should be evaluated as to whether implementation will improve the visual environment for residents and visitors.

Does the policy provide for the enhancement or protection of the existing townscape or does it provide for development that is likely to detract from the existing townscape?

CULTURAL HERITAGE

Concerned largely with the built heritage of the Development Plan area, principally listed buildings and conservation areas, but also archaeological sites and ancient monuments.

Each policy should be evaluated as to whether implementation will protect or enhance listed buildings, conservation areas and structures of architectural and historic importance and interest.

Does this policy ensure that the cultural heritage of the Development Plan area, both qualitatively and quantitatively is protected?

MINERALS CONSERVATION

Concerned with the consumption of minerals, safeguarding of district resources and the reuse/recycling of materials.

Each policy should be evaluated as to whether implementation will have a deleterious effect on mineral conservation.

Does the policy result in a sterilisation of mineral resources or does it generate demand for mineral, and other non-renewable resources?

Does the policy / proposal offer any opportunity for the re-use of material, aggregates, etc. from an existing developed site in order to help reduce the need for new materials, aggregates, etc. from minerals extraction sites?

WATER CONSERVATION AND QUALITY

Concerned with river and ground water levels, coastal waters and the purity of water supply. Efficiency of water use and the availability of, or the ability to provide, infrastructure for both clean water supply and for sewerage are important factors.

Each policy should be evaluated as to whether implementation will have an adverse effect on water conservation and quality.

Does the policy safeguard the quality of water resources available?

Does it generate additional pressure on the resources available?

FLOOD RISK AND COASTAL EROSION

Concerned with whether a site, policy or proposal would adversely affect either fluvial (river based) or alluvial floodplain. Potential impacts include the causing or worsening of flooding (including surface water flooding) or potentially causing or worsening the risks or effects of flooding elsewhere.

Each policy should be evaluated to check whether other potential impacts may arise, which could be on either river catchment areas (a river's wider system, including tributaries, etc.) or coastal management zones.

AIR QUALITY

Concerned with levels of all airborne pollutants significance, but particularly carbon dioxide, and changes in atmospheric balance.

Each policy should be evaluated as to whether implementation will exacerbate or improve local air pollution problems. Within this criteria the provision, and extent, of new tree cover will be considered, as additional planting will have a beneficial effect on air quality.

Will the policy result in deterioration of air quality?

Are there significant opportunities for increased tree cover?

OPEN SPACE

Concerned with the quality of, and accessibility to, open spaces with both urban and rural areas.

Open space may be of recreational and/or aesthetic value to the Development Plan area.

Each policy should be evaluated as to whether implementation enhances public access or whether the quality and quantity of open space is adversely affected.

Does the policy provide extra protection of open spaces within urban areas?

Will the policy enhance the extent of public access?

BROWNFIELD LAND

Concerned with potential for beneficial re-use of previously developed land. Government planning policy aims to ensure that all new development (particularly housing) is on 'brownfield' land wherever possible.

Each policy should be evaluated to test whether it is on a brownfield site and would therefore promote beneficial re-use of such sites, in preference to greenfield development?

LAND POLLUTION

Concerned with land dereliction and contamination, and opportunities for land reclamation, plus soil quality and soil erosion.

Will the policy have an impact on land pollution?

Does the policy provide opportunities for the reclamation and re-use of derelict and in particular contaminated land?

AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

Concerned with quality and land available for agriculture and forestry.

Each policy should be evaluated as to whether implementation will lead to a reduction of good quality agricultural land.

Does the policy safeguard the best and most versatile agricultural land?

Would a proposal result in the fragmentation and a threat to the viability of agricultural land holdings?

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Concerned with energy use in buildings, design and layouts. Choice of materials, insulation and design are all important. Layouts of development proposals, orientation, topography, overshadowing to prevent solar gain, are all relevant factors? Also concerned with the availability and potential for exploitation of renewable sources including wind, wave, solar and biomass.

Each policy should be evaluated as to whether the policy provides opportunities for increasing the use of renewable energy

Does the policy provide opportunities for increased energy efficiency within the built environment?
Does the proposal offer the potential for modern, energy-efficient design layouts and development schemes?

Does this policy restrict opportunities for the development of the renewable sources of power?

THRIVING COMMUNITIES

Concerned with maintaining or promoting the vitality of local communities and community life.

Each policy should be evaluated to assess housing proposal in relation to availability of employment, services, facilities, cultural and recreational services, etc.

Is the proposal in scale for the area or would it 'swamp' a locality / community?

Would the policy / proposal serve to add to local balance and vitality in a town, village or other area? Examples include the need or otherwise for housing provision, affordable housing, employment or other services / facilities.

Could the policy / proposal provide for any other development related community benefits other than those basic measures necessary to provide for its implementation?

WELL-BEING

Concerned with the environmental quality of the Development Plan Area, as perceived through sight, sound, smell and touch. It also includes perception of health, security and general well-being. Visual appearance of the environment will be important.

Although there is an overlap with some other criteria (particularly landscape and townscape) this is an aspect covering the various facets of the local environment.

Each policy should be evaluated as to whether implementation will retain, improve or exacerbate local environmental conditions.

Will implementation of the policy lead to an increase in light pollution, noise levels or odour problems, which would affect environmental quality?

ECONOMIC GROWTH

Concerned with effects on employment levels and diversity, as well as locally important industries, companies or other employers. The need to encourage investment is involved.

Each policy should be evaluated so as to assess its wide economic effects, including the health of the local and possibly wider economy.

Would the policy lead to loss or increase in jobs or the quality thereof?

Would the policy result in spin-off benefits, such as use of other local business, companies, suppliers, etc?

EQUITY

Concerned with discrimination (or its converse benefits) against any particular individuals, groups or sections of the population within society. This could be groups such as the young, the elderly, the disabled, the less well-off or otherwise socially disadvantaged, those of working age or those not economically active. Overlap with social inclusion issues.

Each policy should be evaluated to assess whether it would disadvantage any particular individuals or groups or sections of the population. This may translate to particular local residents as the result of a development proposal through potential impacts on their residential amenity. This could be as a result of noise / general disturbance, privacy / overlooking or overshadowing / loss of light, traffic generation, site access arrangements, etc. All such impacts often tend to be localised so that they do not impact on those living further away from the particular site.

Would a proposal serve to overload (as it could be seen) a particular locality with development since this can seem inequitable to local residents of that area who may favour a more dispersed development strategy (in the interests of social / geographical justice)?