Sustainability Appraisal Commentary Volume 1

Stafford Borough
Local Development Framework

Contents

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Non-technical Summary

What is the LDF?

The Local Development Framework (LDF) is a term used to describe a folder of documents, which includes all the local planning authority's local development documents. An LDF is usually comprised of:

- Development Plan Documents (which form part of the statutory development plan)
- Supplementary Planning Documents (these may cover a range of issues and provides further detail of policies and proposals in a 'parent' Development Plan Document).

The Stafford Borough LDF is comprised of the 3 following documents:

- Core Strategy Development Plan Document
- Allocations and Site Specific Policy Development Plan Document
- Development Management Development Plan Documents

Details of the timetable of production for these 3 documents can be found in the Local Development Scheme (LDS) on the Boroughs [website](#).

What is Sustainability Appraisal?

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is a tool used to appraise planning policy documents in order to promote sustainable development through the integration of social, environmental and economic considerations.

Why carry out Sustainability Appraisal?

Sustainability Appraisal is a compulsory requirement under the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act. Councils must also comply with the requirements of the European Community 2001/42/EEC Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive.

What is the Sustainability Appraisal Framework?

The Sustainability Appraisal Framework is the framework that will be used to appraise planning policies. The framework is made up of sustainability objectives, indicators and targets tailored to the key sustainability issues for Stafford Borough.

What are the Main Stages of SA?

Stage A Setting the context, objectives, baseline and scope for the SA (Scoping Stage)

Stage B Developing and refining plan options (SA Commentary)

Stage C Appraisal of the social, economic and environmental effects of the plan (SA Report)

Stage D Consulting on the plan and the SA Report

Stage E Monitoring the implementation of the plan

Non-technical Summary

Summary of SA Commentary findings

The SA Commentary appraises the 6 broad development strategy options outlined in the Core Strategy Issues and Options document titled *The Plan for Stafford Borough - Borough Wide Development Strategy*. along with a 'business as usual' approach against the SA objectives. The most sustainable option is to provide development at Stafford, Stone and the principal settlements as these locations provide greater employment, housing and public transport opportunities. Continuing with the policies in the Stafford Borough Local Plan would not provide adequate provision of employment and housing required to meet the needs of the Borough.

Due to the broad nature of the development strategy options, it is difficult to predict impacts against the SA objectives at this stage. However the SA recommends the development strategy include policies on the following areas:

- Housing type and tenure, including affordable housing and sustainable housing design
- Environmental protection and enhancement, including mitigation measures and green infrastructure
- Renewable Energy
- Employment provision
- Development infrastructure including transport, water resources and community services and facilities

Next Steps

The results of this Sustainability Appraisal Commentary along with results from public consultation will be fed back into production of the Core Strategy. A subsequent Core Strategy Issues and Options paper titled *The Plan for Stafford Borough - Delivering the Development Strategy* will be produced in Spring 2008. This will be looking at the options for development in more detail and will be appraised against the Sustainability Appraisal Framework in the Sustainability Appraisal Commentary Volume 2.

How can I get involved?

You can make comments on any part of this document. We are also asking for comments with regard to:

- Broad strategy options and alternatives
- Assumptions and recommendations made for each strategy option

If you would like to make any comments, view the complete document or require any further information please contact [Forward Planning](#) or call 01785 619591.

Alternatively the full SA Commentary can be viewed below in 1 'Introduction' and on our [website](#).

Introduction 1

1.1   Plan making has always involved choices between different options for handling issues such as housing, transport, employment and the environment. Sustainability Appraisal (SA) provides a tool for helping authorities to identify sustainable approaches for dealing with key planning issues and environmental concerns.

1.2   In 1999 the Government set out four central aims for achieving Sustainable Development in 'A Better Quality of Life: A Strategy for Sustainable Development in the UK.' (DETR, 1999). The four aims are as follows:

- Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone
- Effective protection of the environment
- Prudent use of natural resources
- Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment

1.3   To meet these aims 'Securing the Future – A UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy 2005' (Defra, 2005) presents the following guiding principles to bring together and build on existing principles in order to set out an overarching approach for Sustainable Development.

- Living with environmental limits
- Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society
- Achieving a sustainable economy
- Promoting good governance
- Using sound science responsibly

1.4   To be effective, Sustainability Appraisal must be fully integrated into the plan-making process. The SA will appraise each stage of the development plan's production, and audit key policy decisions. Sustainability Appraisal will monitor the effectiveness of the plan during its implementation in order to inform future revisions.

1.5   Sustainability Appraisal will apply to both types of Local Development Documents prepared by the Council, allowing Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) to be appraised to determine whether they are likely to make a positive contribution to sustainable development objectives, and not just minimisation of adverse impacts. In the case of Development Plan Documents requiring both SA and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) the SEA requirements will be incorporated into the SA reports.

1.6   The objective of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive is:

> "to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans . . . with a view to promoting sustainable development".

1.7   The full title of the European Community Directive is 'Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2001 on the assessment of the effect of certain plans and programmes on the environment'. However for the sake of brevity, this Scoping Report will refer to the Directive as the SEA Directive.

1 Introduction

1.8   The objectives of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive are:

- Identifying strategic alternatives;
- Collecting baseline environmental information;
- More thorough prediction of significant environmental effects;
- Greater consultation of the public and statutory environmental agencies;
- Addressing and monitoring the significant environmental effects of the plan.

1.9   The SEA Directive defines environmental assessment as a procedure comprising of

- Preparing an environmental report on the likely significant effects;
- Preparing an environmental report on the likely significant effects of the draft plan;
- Carrying out consultation on the draft plan and the accompanying environmental report;
- Taking into account the environmental report and the results of consultation in decision making; and
- Providing information when the plan is adopted and showing how the results of   the SEA have been taken into account.

1.10   The main difference between Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is that SEA is focused primarily on environmental effects, whilst SA incorporates the requirements of the SEA Directive and goes further by examining the social and economic impacts of the plan. Therefore the SA process fully complies with the European Parliament's SEA Directive and the SEA Regulations prepared by the British Government.

Sustainability Appraisal & The Development Plan Document Process 2

2.1 It has been normal practice for those preparing and commenting on development plans to consider their likely environmental effects. Therefore the principle of assessing the environmental consequences of plans is not new. However what the SEA Directive and SA process require is the use of an explicit and systematic method to comprehensively and impartially identify and assess the environmental consequences of the development plan.

Picture 2.1 Sustainability Appraisal and the Development Plan Document Process
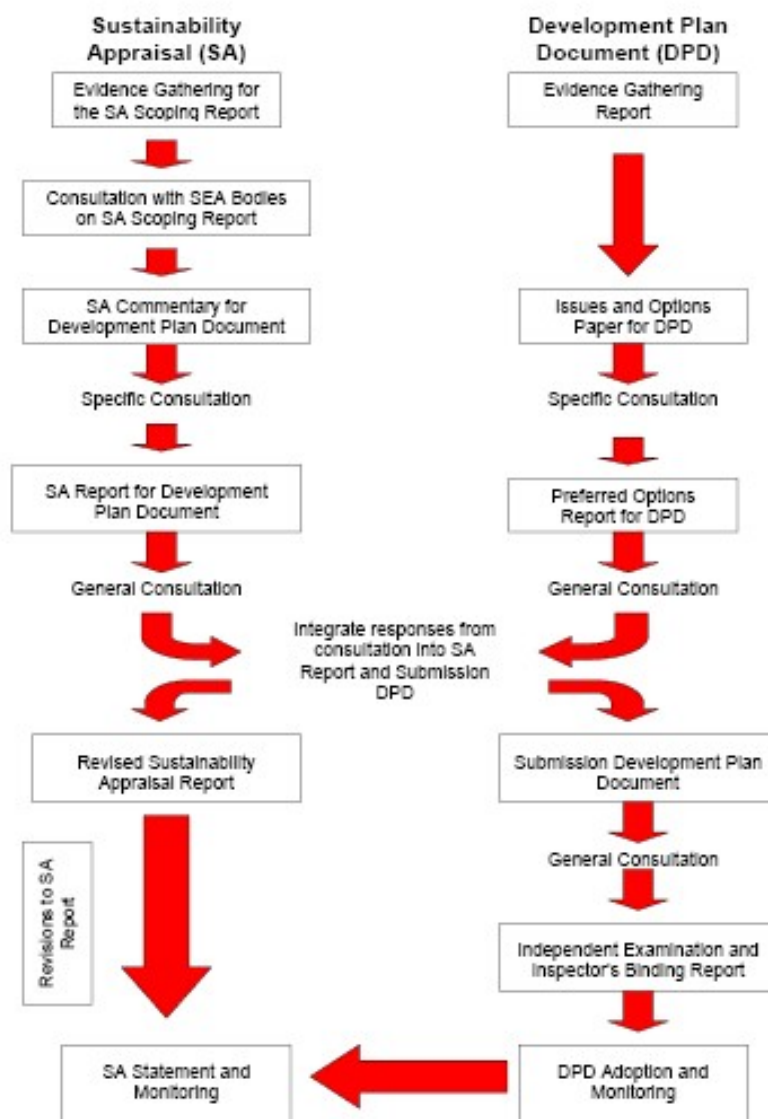
2 Sustainability Appraisal & The Development Plan Document Process

2.2 The method for completing a SA on a Development Plan Document (DPD) involves the process outlined in Figure 2.1 below. Although the approach is presented as a sequence relevant objectives, policies and proposals may be re-examined in light of the information gathered through the SA process and in associated consultations. The consultation process and submission of both the Sustainability Appraisal Reports and the DPD will take place at the same time.

2.3 The Government has designated the Environment Agency, Natural England (formed from English Nature and the Countryside Agency) and English Heritage as 'authorities with environmental responsibilities' through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. These agencies must be consulted by plan making authorities in England on the content of the Sustainability Appraisal Report setting out the process undertaken and SEA requirements. Other agencies will also be consulted to provide feedback on the social and economic aspects of the Report.

Scoping Report

2.4 The Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report was published for consultation in October 2007. The document explained; the purpose of SA, set out the stages of SA, established the baseline data and outlined the SA framework that will be used to inform the SA of LDF documents.

2.5 The Council consulted the authorities with environmental responsibilities and other stakeholders. A list of consultees who made comments on the report can be found in Appendix 2.

2.6 The Scoping Report invited comments regarding the following:

- Plan objectives
- Sustainability Issues
- The Sustainability Appraisal Framework

2.7 Some minor amendments have been made to the content of the Scoping Report in light of comments made. In particular the following changes have been made:

- Additional baseline data
- Rewording of sustainability indicators and targets

2.8 The following plans, policies and programmes have been added to the list suggested in the Scoping, and will be taken into consideration throughout the SA Framework and can be seen in the Technical Appendices 2

- Sport Across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Business Plan 2006 - 2009 'Increasingly Active, Healthy and Successful Communities'
- West Midlands Economic Strategy 'Connecting to Success'
- WMRA Sustainability Checklist
- NERC, 2006
- West Midlands Prospectus for Green Infrastructure
- Prospectus for Landscapes for Living, West Midlands Biodiversity Partnership
- Trent Catchment Flood Management Plan, Environment Agency
- Staffordshire Trent Valley Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy (CAMS)

Sustainability Appraisal & The Development Plan Document Process 2

- Groundwater Protection: Policy and Practice (GP3) Environment Agency
- Staffordshire Washlands Partnership - Farming Floodplains For the Future
- Environment Agency Policy Regarding Culverts, 1999
- A Better Place to Play, Environment Agency Strategy for Water-related Sport and Recreation 2006 - 2011
- Soil: A Precious Resource, Environment Agency
- Water Services Infrastructure Guide, Environment Agency
- Environmental Quality in Spatial Planning
- Confident Communities in a Secure Britain: The Home office Strategic Plan 2004 - 2008
- Safer Places: The planning system and crime prevention
- Sustainable Communities: Homes for All
- Strong and Prosperous Communities: Local Government White Paper
- Healthy Sustainable Communities
- Diversity and Equality in Planning
- Faith and Community: A good practice guide for local authorities
- Community Cohesion - an action guide
- European Landscape Convention
- Historic Landscape Characterisation, English Heritage
- Heritage Protection White Paper (2007)

B2 Developing the DPD Options

2.9   The Sustainability Appraisal Commentary covers the second stage of the Sustainability Appraisal process, Stage B2 – Developing the DPD Options. Therefore the Sustainability Appraisal Commentary not only contains sustainabiltiy appraisal objectives and issues set out in the Scoping Report but also covers the following SA processes:

- The strategic options considered and how they were identified; and
- Comparison of the social, environmental and economic effects of the options.

2.10   Various policy options have been developed during the preparation of the Core Strategy DPD. The preparation of these strategy options have been assessed, using the Sustainability Appraisal process, to measure performance in terms of sustainability by considering all economic, social and environmental factors.

2.11   The effects of a policy option can only be understood by comparing it with a state, an option or an objective. The table in chapter 4 of this Sustainability Appraisal Commentary sets out the broad alternatives for each policy topic area. This process has informed the preparation of policy topic options. Furthermore the SA assessment has also considered the timescale and significance of the effect.

3 Sustainability Appraisal Framework

3.1 The Sustainability Appraisal Framework is the framework that will be used to appraise planning policies and plan options. The framework is made up of sustainability objectives, indicators and targets tailored to the key sustainability issues for Stafford Borough.

3.2 The principle of the SA Framework was outlined in the Scoping Report, in particular the methodology used for assessing each planning policy or plan option. The table below shows the sustainability appraisal objectives that will be used to appraise the development strategy options in this SA Commentary.

Sustainability Appraisal Objectives

3.3 The following objectives, indicators, targets and sustainability issues were put forward in the Scoping Report. Some have been amended following consultation on the Scoping Report. The following indicators and targets will assist in the decision making.

Sustainability Objectives, Indicators and Targets			
	Sustainability Objective	**SEA Topic**	**Indicator and Target**
Economic	**1. To create high, stable and equitable levels of employment**	N / A	• Employment Rate Target: Maintain good performance • Unemployment Rate Target: Maintain good performance • Gross Value Added Target: Increase in line with figure for South Staffordshire • Number of jobs created across all sectors of the economy Target: Increase • Number of new jobs created in rural areas Target: Increase
	2. To ensure high and stable level of economic diversity and competitiveness that recognises		• Foreign Direct Investment Target: Increase share of FDI • % of employees per Advantage West Midlands target cluster

Sustainability Appraisal Framework 3

	Sustainability Objective	SEA Topic	Indicator and Target
	social and environmental issues		Target: Increase the % of employees per AWM target cluster from 57.5%, (Stafford) in line with Southern Staffordshire (62.7%) • The number of people reaching NVQ4+ qualifications Target: Increase • Employment land take up rates on previously developed land Target: Increase take up rates • Number of planning permissions for business premises linked to farm diversification in rural areas Target: Increase • Number of development sites with mixed business uses Target: Increase • Employment land supply in years Target: To have 10 years supply of land. • Employment land take up rates Target: Increase take up to meet the RSS requirement
	3. To sustain the vitality and viability of Stafford Borough's towns and villages, and their communities	N / A	• Adaptability and proximity of new developments to services Target: No new development beyond 5 kilometres of a Town Centre • Number of Vacant Units

Sustainability Objectives, Indicators and Targets

3 Sustainability Appraisal Framework

	Sustainability Objectives, Indicators and Targets		
	Sustainability Objective	**SEA Topic**	**Indicator and Target**
			Target: Reduce • Rank of centres: Stafford ranked at 115 Target: Increase rank • Housing densities in town centres Target: 40-50 dwellings per hectare in town centres • Retail land take up rates Target: Increase
	4. To support the needs of the local rural economy and communities.	N / A	• Number of planning permissions for business premises linked to farm diversification in rural areas Target: Increase • Availability of affordable homes to accommodate local needs in rural areas Target: Increase according to identified need • Amount of employment land on previously developed land that could be used to expand existing business located within the Green Belt Target: Increase according to identified need • Re-use vacant land and buildings for employment purposes in the rural area Target: Increase • Number of facilities located within rural centres Target: Increase according to identified need

Sustainability Appraisal Framework 3

	Sustainability Objective	SEA Topic	Indicator and Target
	Sustainability Objectives, Indicators and Targets		
			• Number of sites identified for affordable housing through rural exception sites Target: Increase
	5. To reduce vulnerability to the effects of climate change such as the risk of flooding, on public wellbeing, the economy and the environment.	N / A	• Number of new developments incorporating sustainable drainage systems and other water saving techniques Target: All new developments to incorporate water saving measures and sustainable drainage techniques • The number of developments given planning permission contrary to EA advice Target: None
Social	**6. To ensure that everyone has the opportunity of a decent and affordable home**	Population and Human Health	• Number of new housing developments that incorporate public transport provision Target: All / Increase • Number of affordable / special needs housing Target: 73 homes per year until 2011 • Number of unfit dwellings Target: Meet Government's decent homes standards • Homelessness Target: To provide sufficient short / medium term accommodation • Number of new residential developments that provide for the accessibility of all users

3 Sustainability Appraisal Framework

	Sustainability Objectives, Indicators and Targets		
	Sustainability Objective	**SEA Topic**	**Indicator and Target**
			Target: All / Increase • Number of new residential developments in the rural area providing for identified affordable / local needs housing Target: Increase according to identified need • Number of new residential developments incorporating high quality layouts and landscaping
	7. To improve opportunities for access for all to work, education, health and local services	Population and Human Health	• Number of new developments incorporating a range of transport options Target: All • Disabled access Target: All new build to comply with Disability Discrimination Act • % of development within walking distance (350 metres) of a frequents service Target: 100% of all new developments in urban areas • Number of mixed use developments Target: Increase
	8. To reduce and prevent crime and reduce fear of crime	Population and Human Health	• Number of new developments incorporating crime prevention design measures Target: Increase • Recorded crime per 1,000 population Target: Maintain good results relative to other districts • Fear of crime surveys

Sustainability Appraisal Framework 3

	Sustainability Objective	SEA Topic	Indicator and Target
Sustainability Objectives, Indicators and Targets			
			Target: Reduce fear of crime
			• Number of new developments incorporating crime prevention design measures
			Target: Increase
	9. To reduce the impact of noise and light pollution	Population and Human health	• Number of developments incorporating landscaping as a way of reducing potential noise or light impacts
			Targets: Increase
			• Public concern over noise
			Target: Low % of residents surveyed who are concerned with different types of noise
			• Proximity of land uses that create noise and / or antisocial behaviour at night
			Target: Low number of breaches of IPPC permits on permitted noise level
			• Public concern over light pollution from residential developments
			Target: Low % of residents surveyed who are concerned about light pollution
	10. To improve health, safety and well-being across the whole community	Air, Population and Human Health	• Number of Listed Buildings at Risk
			Target: Reduce
			• Number of development sites that lead to the creation and enhancement of open spaces
			Target: Increase in line with Open Space Strategy

3 Sustainability Appraisal Framework

Sustainability Objectives, Indicators and Targets			
	Sustainability Objective	**SEA Topic**	**Indicator and Target**
			• Number of waterside developments which improve accessibility and quality of the water environment Target: All • % of residents within 500m (15 minutes walk) of public open space Target: Increase • Modal Split Target: Increase potential trips on foot, quadruple levels of cycling trips by 2012 compared to 1996 (Dept. for Transport, Transport 10 year Plan, 2000) • Air Quality Management Area Target: No air quality management area • Number of buildings and vacant land reused Target: Increase • Number of developments within town centres incorporating quality landscaping and linkages with the surrounding urban fabric Target: All • Hectares of public open space per 1,000 population Target: Increase in line with target of 2.43 hectares per 1,000 population
Community	11. To reduce societal contributions to climate change	Biodiversity, Fauna and Flora	• % of new developments producing Travel Plans to encourage use of sustainable modes of travel

Sustainability Appraisal Framework 3

	Sustainability Objective	SEA Topic	Indicator and Target
			Sustainability Objectives, Indicators and Targets
			Target: All
			• Length of cycleways
			Target: Increase
			• Number of new development incorporating water efficiency techniques
			Targets: Increase
			• % of new developments encompassing energy efficient design / layout / features
			Target: 30% improvement in energy efficiency over 15 years from 1996 (11.1% achieved so far)
			• Woodlands lost to new development
			Target: None
			• Proportion of energy supply to be secured from decentralised and renewable or low-carbon energy sources
			Target: 10% or higher
	12. To protect and enhance biodiversity	Biodiversity, Fauna and Flora	• Number of developments that may affect features of biodiversity conservation value
			Target: Reduce to minimum
			• Number of developments that may affect features of geological conservation value
			Target: Reduce to minimum
			• Quality of historic parks and gardens
			Target: Maintain / Conserve
			• Quality of SSSI's

3 Sustainability Appraisal Framework

	Sustainability Objectives, Indicators and Targets		
	Sustainability Objective	**SEA Topic**	**Indicator and Target**
			Target: 95% of SSSI's to be in 'favourable or 'recovering' condition by 2010 • Sites achieving Biodiversity Action Plan Target: To achieve 100% of targets as set out in Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan • Number of planning permissions given affecting SSSI designated sites Target: No planning permissions to be given that affect SSSI sites • Number of developments that protect and enhance sites and spaces important for biodiversity as set out in the Biodiversity as set out in the Biodiversity Action Plan Target: Increase
	13. To protect and conserve soil	Soil	• Percentage of development on previously developed land Target: In accordance with national and regional guidance • Area of statutory contaminated land remedied Target: Await Environment Agency Soil Strategy Implementation Plan • Area of land converted to organic / agricultural environment schemes Target: Increase • Soil degradation Target: Minimise the degradation or loss of soils to new developments

Sustainability Appraisal Framework 3

	Sustainability Objective	SEA Topic	Indicator and Target
Sustainability Objectives, Indicators and Targets			
			• Number of developments given planning permission contrary to EA advice
			Target: No planning permission to be granted contrary to the Environment Agency's advice based on the risk of contamination to underlying groundwater
	14. To protect and enhance water quality of the Borough's rivers whilst maximising their carrying capacity through achieving sustainable water resource management	Water	• Number of developments that increase water consumption or pollution Target: None / Minimise • Quality of rivers, canals and freshwater bodies within the Borough Target: Achieve standards set out by the Water Framework Directive • Number of new developments incorporating sustainable drainage systems and other water saving techniques Target: All new development to incorporate water saving measures • The number of development given planning permission contrary to EA advice Target: None • Number of developments given planning permission contrary to EA advice Target: No planning permission to be granted contrary to the Environment Agency's advice based on the risk of contamination to underlying groundwater
	15. To protected, enhance and, where necessary,	Cultural Heritage and Landscape	• Change in areas of highly sensitive historic landscape character

3 Sustainability Appraisal Framework

Sustainability Objectives, Indicators and Targets		
	Sustainability Objective	**SEA Topic**	**Indicator and Target**
	restore designated landscape areas and town character, scenic beauty, local distinctiveness, historic and cultural character		Target: None • Number and % of Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments 'at risk' Target: Reduce the number of sites and buildings at risk • Number of historic buildings restored and brought back into se Target: Increase • % of Borough covered by historic landscape / urban characterisation studies Target: Increase • Number of planning permissions adversely affecting the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Target: None • Provision of accessible natural greenspace Target: A greenspace of at least 2ha < 300m from home; a Local Nature Reserve at a minimum of 1ha per thousand population; at least one greenspace site within 5km of home and one 500ha site within 10km of home • Number of developments and re use of existing buildings in the Green Belt area that do not maintain its openness Target: None • Number of people living close to accessible woodland, accessible recreational routes and spaces Target: Increase

Sustainability Appraisal Framework 3

	Sustainability Objectives, Indicators and Targets		
	Sustainability Objective	**SEA Topic**	**Indicator and Target**
	16. To create a sense of community identity and belonging	Population	• Projected household change Target: Maintain number of households
	17. To ensure tolerance, respect and engagement with people from different cultures, backgrounds and beliefs recognising their rights and responsibilities	Population and Human Health	• % of residents who think that people being attacked because of their skin colour, ethnic origin or religion is a very big or fairly big problem in their local area Target: Reduce
	18. To ensure that all individuals and groups in society have the opportunity to effectively engage in issues relating to their community	Population and Human Health	• E-enabled interactions as a proportion of all possible interactions Target: Increase E-enabled LDF interactions • Number of DPD's compliant with the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) Target: All DPD's to be compliant with the SCI
	19. To encourage a strong, inclusive, community and voluntary sector	Population and Human Health	• % of voluntary / community organisations performing well Target: Maintain
	20. To engender a sense of civic and neighbourhood values, responsibility and pride	Population and Human Heath	• Well-being score Target: Increase well-being score across the Borough

3 Sustainability Appraisal Framework

Sustainability Issues

3.4 The table below sets out the key sustainability issues identified for the Stafford Borough area, based on the baseline information gathered for the Sustainability Appraisal process, outlined in the Scoping Report and issues identified through consultation on the Scoping Report. The data used in the baseline will be updated where appropriate, when more recent data is available or gaps in baseline data are addressed through further studies.

Key Sustainability Issues
Economic Issues
• Decline in manufacturing industry resulting in job losses
• Opportunities for tourist related economy
• Slight increase in VAT business start ups in Stafford
• Decline in agricultural industries
• Vacant units within the town centres

Key Sustainability Issues
Social Issues
• High levels of deprivation in some areas of the Borough, such as Stafford town
• High number of empty homes across the Borough, the majority of which are empty for more than 6 months
• Slight increase in number of homeless households in recent years
• Low level of provision of affordable housing compared with rising house prices and special needs housing
• Lack of access to services and facilities in some parts of the Borough
• The level of outdoor space provision is much lower than the national target

Key Sustainability Issues
Environmental Issues
• Loss of biodiversity
• Quality of SSSI's is improving, but still below the national target
• Whilst river biology and chemistry have improved over the last decade, both are still below the national average
• High percentage of new homes are being delivered on Previously Developed Land
• Stafford's Biomass energy project will provide renewable energy and opportunities for further renewable energy development in the future.
• Climate change and adaptation for it
• Increased use of the car
• Flood risk in the Borough (particularly in Stafford town centre)

Settlement Strategy Options 4

Plan Objectives

4.1   It is normal for this stage of the Sustainability Appraisal to appraise plan objectives against the SA objectives. However no plan objectives have been drawn up in the initial Core Strategy Issues and Options paper. A detailed appraisal will be carried out in the second stage of the SA Commentary, where the plan objectives will be defined.

Developing the DPD Options

4.2   The table below sets out some of the broad options and alternatives for the development strategy. Although the alternatives being considered at this stage are broad-based and strategic, more detailed consideration will be adopted during the formulation of policies and proposals.

4.3   To maintain a strategic overview the alternatives considered during the early stage have not been elaborated in too much detail. A level of further detail will be assessed as the options are developed and the Core Strategy progresses.

Topic Area	Development Strategy
Obviation	• Do not allow any more development regardless of need • Do not allow any more development regardless of demand • Allow development regardless of need • Bring forward development that reduces the necessity for future growth to service the new development • Bring forward development that encourages the necessity for future growth to service the new development
Mode / Process	• Do not allow any type of development • Encourage any type of development • Unconventional layout of development only • Traditional layout of development only • Energy efficient and renewable layout of development only • High quality design any layout of development to limit impact • Conventional design and layout of development regardless of impact • High density of development • Low density of development • Infill and previously developed land development • Greenfield development • Large scale developments • Small scale developments • Least intrusive development • More intrusive development

4 Settlement Strategy Options

Topic Area	Development Strategy
	• Mitigate impact of development layout close to designated sites • No mitigation of impact of development layout for designated sites
Location	• Within existing settlements of Stafford and Stone • On the edge of Stafford and Stone • Within existing range of settlements • On the edge of the existing range of settlements • Within the rural areas • Near residential areas • Away from residential areas • Near to industrial areas • Away from industrial areas • Near to existing infrastructure • Away from existing infrastructure • Near to the strategic road network • Away from the strategic road network • Near to the rail and other forms of public transport • Away from rail and other forms of public transport • Within the Green Belt • Outside the Green Belt • Within or near the Cannock Chase AONB • Away from Cannock Chase AONB • Away from Sites of Special Scientific Interests • Within or near Sites of Special Scientific Interests • Away from floodplains • Within or near floodplains • Away from groundwater source protection zones • Within or near to groundwater source protection zones • Away from sites designated for the nature conservation importance • Within or near sites designated for the nature conservation importance • Away from sites of historic importance • Within or near to sites of historic importance • Away from sites of geological importance • Within or near to sites of geological importance
Implementation	• Do not allow development at any time • Allow development to take place at any time • Allow development to take place immediately

Settlement Strategy Options 4

Topic Area	Development Strategy
	• Phase development throughout the Plan period • Phase development with an emphasis towards the start of the Plan period • Phase development with an emphasis towards the end of the Plan period • Unconventional construction of built development • Traditional construction of built development • Energy efficient and renewable construction of built development • High quality design development to limit impact • Conventional design development regardless of impact • High density of development • Low density of development • Inconspicuous site layout and construction of development • Conspicuous site layout and construction of development • Mitigate impact of built development close to designated sites • No mitigation of impact of built development for designated sites • Ensure all infrastructure, Section 106 agreements and planning conditions are in place prior to development coming forward • Ensure phased infrastructure, Section 106 agreements and planning conditions occurs as development comes forward • Only essential infrastructure to the site is required • Minimise noise and vibration levels during construction / usage • No account of noise and vibration levels during construction / usage

Key Question 1

Do you think broad options and alternatives identified in the table are correct?

4.4   From this range of possible alternatives the following 6 broad strategy options have been prepared to set out the realistic approach for the Borough through the Core Strategy:

• Stafford focused
• Stafford & Stone focused
• Stafford, Stone and the Principal Settlements
• Stafford & Principal settlements only
• Selected settlement growth points
• Growth Distribution widely

4 Settlement Strategy Options

4.5   SEA guidance makes reference to defining the effects on local environment, and social and economic circumstances of doing nothing, often referred to as 'business as usual'. The SA process has interpreted this to mean continuing with the Stafford Borough Local Plan 2001 policies and allocations, and has used trends in the baseline data to predict possible effects.

The appraisal of these broad strategy options and a summary of each can be found in Appendix i.

Key Question 2

Should any other strategy options be appraised?

Next Steps 5

5.1   This Sustainability Appraisal Commentary Volume 1 has been prepared in order to appraise the options in *The Plan for Stafford Borough - Borough Wide Development Strategy* paper.

5.2   The results of this Sustainability Appraisal Commentary along with results from public consultation will be fed back into the Core Strategy production. *The Plan for Stafford Borough - Delivering the Development Strategy* will be produced in Spring 2008. This will be looking at the options for development in more detail and will also be appraised against the Sustainability Appraisal Framework in the Sustainability Appraisal Commentary Volume 2.

5.3   The more detailed appraisal of development strategies will also draw on information from the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Habitat Regulation Assessment to assist in the appraisal process.

5.4   The remaining stages of the Sustainability Appraisal process are as follows:

- Stage B2 - Developing DPD Options (of more detailed policy options)

- Stage B3 and B4 – Predicting and Evaluating the Effects of the DPD

- Stage C – Preparing the SA Report

- Stage D – Consulting on the plan and SA Report

- Stage E – Monitoring the Significant Effects of Implementing the DPD

5.5   For further information regarding the SA process please contact the Forward Planning team on 01785 619591 or visit our website.

i Appraisal of Options

			SA Objective →	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Strategy Option 3	L			+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	-	+	?	+	+	+
	M			+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	-	+	?	+	+	+
	S			+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	?	+	+	+
Strategy Option 2	L			+	+	-	-	-	-	+	?	+	?	+	+	-	-	-	+	?	-	-	-
	M			+	+	-	-	-	-	+	?	+	?	+	+	?	+	-	+	?	-	-	-
	S			+	+	-	-	-	-	+	?	-	?	+	+	+	+	-	+	?	-	-	-
Strategy Option 1	L			+	+	-	-	-	-	-	?	+	?	+	+	-	-	-	+	?	-	-	-
	M			+	+	-	-	-	-	-	?	+	?	+	+	?	-	-	+	?	-	-	-
	S			+	+	-	-	-	-	-	?	-	?	+	+	+	+	-	+	?	-	-	-

Appraisal of Options i

	S	M	L	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Strategy Option 4 S				+	?	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	?	+	+	+
Strategy Option 4 M				+	?	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	-	+	?	+	+	+
Strategy Option 4 L				+	?	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	-	+	?	+	+	+
Strategy Option 5 S				-	+	?	+	+	+	-	?	-	?	-	-	-	-	-	+	?	?	+	+
Strategy Option 5 M				-	+	?	+	+	+	-	?	-	?	-	-	-	-	-	+	?	?	+	+
Strategy Option 5 L				-	+	?	+	+	+	-	?	+	?	-	-	-	-	-	+	?	?	+	+
Strategy Option 6 S				-	?	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	+	-	-	+	?	+	-	+
Strategy Option 6 M				-	?	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	+	?	+	-	+
Strategy Option 6 L				-	?	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	+	?	+	-	+

i Appraisal of Options

Key	
+	Positive Impact
-	Negative Impact
0	No Significant Impact
?	Effect uncertain at broad stage
S	Short Term Impact (0 - 10 years)
M	Medium Term Impact (10 - 30 years)
L	Long Term Impact (30+ years)

i.1 The SA framework has been used to appraise the strategy options. In particular the baseline data, known sustainability issues, sustainability objectives and targets have been used to draw conclusions on each development strategy option in terms of sustainability.

i.2 These strategy options have also been compared to a 'business as usual' option, drawing on Local Plan policies and allocations, current trends in baseline data and known sustainability issues.

Summary of Options Appraisal ii

Summary of Options Appraisal

Overall the options are, at this stage, too general to make an accurate assessment of their impacts. Below is a brief summary for each broad strategy option.

ii.1   Option 1 - Stafford Focused

Stafford, as the largest town, has the greatest opportunity for providing employment, economic growth, housing and public transport. It is therefore the most sustainable location for development. However by providing all development in Stafford, the rural areas may suffer in terms of lack of housing and employment, resulting in a greater need to travel or move elsewhere. Locating all development in one location may require greater use of Greenfield land.

ii.2   Option 2 - Stafford & Stone Focused

Stone, being the second largest settlement in the Borough also provides opportunity for providing employment, economic growth, housing and public transport. Stone also acts as a rural hinterland for smaller rural settlements and development could meet the needs of some of the smaller rural settlements. Development in these locations may offer greater scope for using previously developed land, which will reduce the need to develop on Greenfield land.

ii.3   Option 3 - Stafford, Stone & Principal Settlements

The Principal Settlements are identified as Barlaston, Eccleshall, Gnosall, Hixon, Little Haywood and Colwich and Great Haywood. All of these settlements have good services and facilities in terms of schools, post office and other convenience stores, public transport and village / community hall. Some of these settlements, in particular Eccleshall and Hixon have good access to employment areas. This option may be the most sustainable by providing appropriate development to meet the needs of the urban and rural population. However, the principal settlements may have less scope for previously developed land, leading to Greenfield development.

ii.4   Option 4 - Stafford & Principal Settlements only

This option would restrict any development in Stone. As stated above, Stafford and the Principal settlements do represent sustainable settlements. Due to the geographic spread of these settlements, they could act as service centres for rural settlements across the Borough. However not all Principal Settlements provide the range of services and facilities as in Stone, for example not all have a medical facility.

ii.5   Option 5 - Selected Settlement Growth Points

This option would involve development at selected settlement growth points. It isn't clear which settlements would be selected as growth points. The settlements with existing good access to employment, facilities and public transport or where such services could be provided would be the most sustainable settlements as growth points. This option may involve greater need for Greenfield land and as a result may have greater landscape and biodiversity impacts.

ii.6   Option 6 - Growth Distributed Widely

ii Summary of Options Appraisal

Whilst this option would allow more settlements to experience growth, not all settlements would be suitable for development, due to lack of facilities, including a regular bus services. Many settlements are also washed over by Green Belt designation or are within or close to other designations such as the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, restricting potential future development.

ii.7   General comments for all options

All options will need to consider flood risk, nature conservation designations, including European designated sites, landscape impacts, the type of development proposed under each option, in particular house type, and existing infrastructure.

ii.8   'Business as usual'

By continuing with policies and allocations in the Local Plan rather than producing a new development strategy there may be have some environmental benefits as further large Greenfield development would not be permitted. The remaining allocations would provide land for 959 dwellings, with additional housing coming from windfall rates, both falling considerably lower than the 10,100 figure stated in the Regional Spatial Strategy. Continuing with the Local Plan would undermine the delivery of affordable housing for the Borough. All employment sites identified in the Local Plan 2001 have been part or completed. Not identifying any new employment allocations or employment policies may lead to increase need to travel outside of the Borough for employment. The Local Plan 2001 does not include any policies on the requirement for renewable energy or for sustainable building design.

Key Question 3

Do you think the comments for each strategy option are correct?

SA Recommendations

ii.9   Overall option 3 and 4 are the most sustainable choices for the development strategy, due to the sustainability of the Stafford, Stone and the Principal Settlements. However there are other settlements such as Weston, Haughton and Tittensor offer similar facilities and services which could be taken into consideration when progressing the development strategy.

ii.10   Due to the broad nature of the development strategy options, it is difficult to predict impacts against the SA objectives at this stage. However the SA recommends the development strategy to include policies on the following areas:

- Housing type and tenure, including affordable housing and sustainable housing design
- Environmental protection and enhancement, including mitigation measures and green infrastructure
- Renewable Energy
- Employment provision
- Development infrastructure including transport, water resources and community services and facilities

List of consultees iii

The following organisations and individuals responded to the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report. Details of the responses can be found on our <ins>consultation webpage</ins>

- Sport across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent
- Mr Tim Midgeley
- Advantage West Midlands
- Local Agenda 21, Stafford Borough Council
- Natural England
- Environment Agency
- Stafford Gospel Hall Trust
- English Heritage