The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) of the Bournemouth Local Plan: Core Strategy: Post Adoption Statement

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Bournemouth Borough Council adopted The Bournemouth Local Plan: Core Strategy on 30th October 2012.

1.2 This statement has been prepared in accordance with paragraph (16) (3) and (4) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (‘The SEA Regulations’). These regulations transpose into UK legislation European Directive 2001/42/EC ((the ‘SEA Directive’) which require a statement to be produced on adoption of a plan or programme, to detail:

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

2. How the environmental report has been taken into account;

3. How opinions expressed through public consultation (on the SEA and SA process) have been taken into account;

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

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

1.3 This statement examines each of these points in turn.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Under section 19(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 local authorities must produce a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) for any new or revised plan or programme. The overall purpose of Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is to promote sustainable development through consideration of social, environmental and economic concerns in the preparation of plans or programmes and to evaluate reasonable alternative approaches, or options. SA is an iterative, ongoing process and was integral to the Core Strategy’s preparation.

2.2 The flowchart diagram overleaf illustrates the entire SA/SEA process, from the initial scoping stage (Stage A), through the stages of developing and refining options (Stage B), preparing the SA report (Stage C), consultation on the SA and plan (Stage D) and monitoring the plan’s implementation (Stage E).
3.0 HOW ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS HAVE BEEN INTEGRATED INTO THE CORE STRATEGY

3.1 SA Scoping Report:

3.2 An appraisal framework, comprising the key environmental, social and economic issues arising in the borough, was prepared during the scoping stage of the SA, which began in 2007. This led to the Planning Authority developing, in consultation with statutory consultees and key stakeholders, a Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (SA Scoping Report).

3.3 The SA Scoping Report sets out the framework of sustainability objectives (the SA Framework) and baseline indicators against which the Core Strategy (CS) was tested at each stage in the plan’s preparation. The SA Scoping Report also identified the main sustainability issues affecting the borough, set out baseline information/statistics and identified higher-level plans and programmes which influenced production of the CS. Policies were appraised against the sustainability objectives, the findings of which influenced policy formulation.
3.4 The initial draft SA Scoping Report was issued for consultation in June 2007 to the three statutory ‘consultation bodies’ referred to in the SA/SEA regulations: Natural England, English Heritage and the Environment Agency. Copies of the report were also issued to the Dorset County SEA Group, neighbouring local authorities including Dorset County Council, the Regional Development Agency, Bournemouth, Dorset & Poole Economic Partnership, Bournemouth & Poole PCT, Dorset Wildlife Trust and the Bournemouth Local Strategic Partnership (Bournemouth 2026).

3.5 Following a later consultation period between 27 February 2009 and 6 April 2009, the Planning Authority received further representations on the SA Scoping Report. Although there were only three representations in total from this second consultation, all from the three statutory SA/SEA bodies, numerous points were raised. A revised SA Scoping Report was published in July 2009. The SA Framework in this version of the SA Scoping Report was used to assess the draft policies in the CS (see paragraph 3.7).

3.6 Sustainability Appraisal:

3.7 SA reports which tested the CS against the SA Framework were produced for each of the CS’s main consultation stages - Issues and Options, Preferred Options, and Pre-submission stage. The Pre-submission SA report also recorded the full SA/SEA process up to that stage, i.e. commencement of consultation on the soundness of the CS. Following the Examination, Main Modifications to the CS were reviewed to ascertain if they raised any issues for the SA and to identify whether they would result in any significant effects (see paragraphs 4.15-4.16).

3.8 The outcome of the SA/SEA process at each stage influenced the revision of the options and/or draft policies for the subsequent stage (this is explained further in section 4). The SA reports were published and consulted upon alongside the CS at each stage and the results of consultation were also fed into the process of CS option/policy selection\(^1\) and revision (see section 5).

3.9 Habitat Regulations Assessment

3.10 Articles 6(3) and (4) of Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Flora and Fauna (the “Habitats Directive”), transposed into UK law through Regulation 61(1) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (‘The Habitat Regulations’), impose a requirement on local planning authorities to undertake a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) for spatial plans to determine whether the effects of those plans would be likely to have a significant adverse impact on the conservation objectives of a European-level protected site.

3.11 The HRA of The Core Strategy was carried out in two parts. The first stage was a Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report designed to assess the potential impact of The Core Strategy on European-level protected wildlife sites. This was prepared and published as part of the Issues and Options stage in March 2010. The second stage was production of a final HRA report for the Preferred Options stage. The findings outlined in the final HRA report are documented on pages 20-21 of the Consultation Statement (see paragraph 5.1). The assessment and production of both HRA reports were both carried out by consultants and the reports were forwarded for consultation to Natural England as the statutory HRA consultation body.

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\(^1\) It is important to note that the SEA Directive requires the assessment of ‘reasonable alternatives’. For the purposes of this SA Post-adoption Statement, ‘options’ and ‘alternatives’ have the same meaning.
4.0 HOW THE ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT HAS BEEN TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT

4.1 The stages of production on the SA, for which consultation on both the CS and SA documents took place simultaneously, were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SA of Issues &amp; Options</td>
<td>August - October 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA of Preferred Options</td>
<td>June - August 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA of Pre-submission CS</td>
<td>August - October 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA and Habitats Regulations Assessment: Supplementary Statement on Proposed Main Modifications</td>
<td>May 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2 The outcome of the SA process (including the SA itself and the consultation responses on the SA) has influenced each successive stage of SA as well as the content of the CS itself.

4.3 To accord with Regulation 30(1)(d) of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008, the Council drafted a Consultation Statement. This document, published in August 2011, provides full details of all the consultation exercises undertaken as part of preparing the CS and SA and states which persons and organisations were invited to make representations on these documents and how the representations were taken into account.

4.4 The Consultation Statement taken together with the Appraisal of Alternative Options (see paragraph 4.7 and section 5) effectively fulfils the requirement under paragraph 16(4)(c) of the SEA Regulations, for the local planning authority to indicate how the environmental report (the SA and the SA Scoping Report) and representations on the CS and ‘relevant documents’ were taken into account. Further detail of how the environmental report was taken into account in relation to updating the SA Framework can also be found in the SA Scoping Report.

4.5 SA of Issues & Options

4.6 Under the objectives and indicators in the revised SA Scoping Report, a SA was produced to document the appraisal of the policy options included in the Issues and Options Report. This SA was published for consultation in August 2009 alongside the Issues and Options consultation document itself.

4.7 The influence of the SA of the Issues and Options on the CS has been documented in a separately published document; the Appraisal of Alternative Options (see section 5).

4.8 SA of Preferred Options

4.9 This stage of the SA involved predicting the existence, and extent, of environmental, social and economic effects that were likely to arise from the implementation of the preferred policy options together and of ‘reasonable alternatives’, as required by the SEA Directive. Where it was possible to identify possible mitigation measures for an impact, these were also noted in the SA report for this stage.

2 The requirement in this regulation was later replaced by paragraph 22(1)(c) of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, which supersedes the 2008 Regulations.
4.10 In order to comply with the SEA Directive, the assessment at both the Issues and Options and Preferred Options stages took account of:

- The likely significance and timeframe of any impacts
- Cumulative effects such as encouraging development near to transport links, improving public transport and encouraging walking and cycling, all of which should help to reduce car usage and related problems of air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Mitigation measures required to overcome or minimise adverse impacts.

4.11 The Consultation Statement explains in detail how the recommendations of the SA, as well as the results of consultation at this stage, were taken into account in drafting final policies from the preferred options.

4.12 **SA of Pre-Submission stage**

4.13 The Pre-Submission SA report documents the entire SA/SEA process up to commencement of consultation on the Pre-Submission CS. The report also indicates how the SA outcome has been taken into account in amending the draft options and policies at each stage prior to this.

4.14 Appendix 4 of the Pre-Submission SA sets out a table of likely cumulative impacts for each of the Pre-Submission policies together with recommended mitigation measures to address any adverse impacts that could potentially arise from introduction of the relevant policies.

4.15 **SA and Habitats Regulations Assessment: Supplementary Statement on Proposed Main Modifications**

4.16 This statement (published in May 2012) was produced following an assessment of the likely sustainability impact of the Main Modifications proposed following the Examination. None of the proposed modifications to the CS were considered likely to have adverse impacts on either the SA or HRA and no further revision was therefore deemed necessary.

5.0 **HOW OPINIONS EXPRESSED THROUGH PUBLIC CONSULTATION (ON THE SEA AND SA PROCESS) HAVE BEEN TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT**

5.1 As indicated in paragraph 4.3, the representations on the CS and SA and how these were taken into account are summarised in the Consultation Statement (published in August 2011), which provides full details of all the consultation exercises undertaken as part of preparing the CS.

5.2 The Council prepared a separate background document (published in January 2011), titled the Appraisal of Alternative Options. This explained how consultation responses on the Issues & Options document were taken into account in combination with other factors in determining the Preferred Options. The Appraisal of Alternative Options also recorded instances where the outcome of an SA score affected selection of an initial option.

5.3 Most of the representations on the SA were made at Preferred Options stage and related to the potential impacts of an urban extension into the Green Belt at North Bournemouth on biodiversity, agriculture and visual amenity. The urban extension was put forward in the draft Regional Spatial Strategy (draft RSS) for the South West, which proposed 16,100 new dwellings for Bournemouth between 2006 and 2026. To meet this target, it had indicated that North Bournemouth should accommodate 1,500 of these dwellings in an urban extension.
5.4 Representations on the Pre-submission CS were received from 37 organisations and individuals during the soundness consultation held between 31 August 2011 and 14 October 2011. The representations were sent to the Planning Inspector for his consideration. None of these comments related to the SA. The representations are summarised in the Regulation 30(1)(e) Statement, published in November 2011, which is available on the Council’s website. This Statement does not however indicate how they were taken into account as it was the purpose of the Inspector’s final report on the CS to indicate where he felt any modifications were necessary in order to make the plan sound.

6.0 THE REASONS FOR CHOOSING THE PLAN OR PROGRAMME AS ADOPTED, IN THE LIGHT OF OTHER REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES DEALT WITH

6.1 The preferred and alternative options were tested via a SA matrix scoring system commonly used in carrying out sustainability appraisal that tested the degree of positive or negative impact on the SA objectives within the framework.

6.2 The SA commented on how sustainable each of these initial options would be along with any considerations that would need to be taken into account when implementing them. This information assisted the Council in selecting preferred options. The Appraisal of Alternative Options document gives justification for instances where options that were identified as sustainable by the appraisal were not taken forward into the Preferred Options (see section 5).

6.3 The Main Modifications put forward following the Examination required insertion of a new policy to reflect the ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’, enshrined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), as well as changes to the wording of some existing policies. As mentioned above these proposed modifications were carefully considered; however none of the proposed modifications were considered likely to have significant adverse implications or to require further revision to the CS.

7.0 THE MEASURES THAT ARE TAKEN TO MONITOR THE SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN OR PROGRAMME

7.1 The documents making up the Local Plan for Bournemouth, including The Core Strategy, are to be kept under continuous review by means of an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). The AMR makes provision for monitoring the sustainability of all local planning documents as they are adopted and implemented.

8.0 FURTHER INFORMATION

8.1 Relevant documents are available to download as follows:

- Core Strategy and related supporting documents: [www.bournemouth.gov.uk/corestrategy](http://www.bournemouth.gov.uk/corestrategy)
- Pre-submission Sustainability Appraisal: [http://www.bournemouth.gov.uk/SA](http://www.bournemouth.gov.uk/SA)
- Regulation 30(1)(d) Consultation Statement: [http://www.bournemouth.gov.uk/CSExamination](http://www.bournemouth.gov.uk/CSExamination)
- Regulation 30(1)(e) Statement: [http://www.bournemouth.gov.uk/CSExamination](http://www.bournemouth.gov.uk/CSExamination)