

Plan for Stafford Borough: Part 2 Sustainability Appraisal Adoption Statement

Incorporating the requirements of Strategic Environmental Assessment
and Habitats Regulation Assessment

January 2017
Stafford Borough Council

1. Introduction

The preparation of the Plan for Stafford Borough: Part 2 has taken place over the last couple of years with involvement of key stakeholders throughout. An Examination of the Plan for Stafford Borough was carried out by an independent Planning Inspector, Mr Mike Fox, who held hearing sessions from the 19th July to 2nd August 2016. Following the hearing sessions the Council proposed and consulted on a number of Main Modifications.

The Council received the Inspector's Final Report on 28th December 2016; the Report determined that the Plan for Stafford Borough: Part 2 was sound, subject to the Main Modifications. The Report states that Stafford Borough Council has carried out adequate Sustainability Appraisal at all stages during the preparation of the Plan, including at the Main Modifications stage, and is in accordance with the Habitat Regulations Assessments to the satisfaction of Natural England. Sustainability Appraisal is a process whereby the social, economic and environmental effects of plan implementation are assessed and alterations suggested where necessary.

The Council is required, under Regulation 16 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 to, as soon as reasonably practicable after the adoption of a plan for which Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment has been carried out, to make a copy of the Plan publicly available alongside a copy of the Sustainability Appraisal report and a Sustainability Appraisal Adoption Statement. The Council must also inform the public and consultation bodies¹ about the availability of these documents.

The Plan for Stafford Borough: Part 2 and all Adoption documentation (including the SA Adoption Statement) will be available to view online, at the Borough Council offices and at local libraries throughout the Borough.

Background

In preparing the Plan, the Council undertook a parallel process of Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal. The Council also met the requirements under its duties through the Habitats Regulations.

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) are requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The Regulations incorporate the requirements of the European Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive, transposed into UK legislation through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

¹ The Consultation bodies are Natural England, The Environment Agency and English Heritage

The Plan for Stafford Borough: Part 2 has been prepared in full compliance with all SA / SEA regulations. This Adoption Statement will set out how SA findings have been taken into account and integrated into the Plan, how consultation responses have been taken into account, how reasonable alternatives were considered and finally identify the measures to be taken to monitor significant effects.

The Habitats Regulation Assessment is covered separately under section 7 of this Statement.

2. How the environmental and sustainability considerations have been integrated into the Plan for Stafford Borough: Part 2

The Plan for Stafford Borough: Part 2 has been produced in several stages, with on-going consultation and Sustainability Appraisal (SA) at each stage. In accordance with good practice, Stafford Borough Council has carried out SA and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) collectively as one assessment at each stage of Plan production. The table in Appendix 1 shows how each of the requirements of the SEA directive have been met.

The SA process has been guided by the SA Framework which was established in 2007, in the SA Scoping document. The SA Framework has been applied to each document throughout the production of the Plan for Stafford Borough: Part 2, to ensure that the policies in the final Plan are sustainable. The table below shows the stages of document production, the related SA report and the stage of the SA process each relates to, with references to the relevant Examination Library documents shown in brackets.

Local Plan Stage	Related SA document and Examination Library Reference	SA/SEA Stage
Prior to commencement	SA Scoping Report (P2-G24)	Stage A - Setting the context, objectives, baseline and scope for the SA
Proposals (options stage)	Plan for Stafford Borough Part 2 – Proposals Sustainability Appraisal Report (P2-G21)	Stage B - Developing and refining plan options (SA Commentary)
Publication	Plan for Stafford Borough Part 2 – Publication document Sustainability Appraisal Report (P2-A19)	Stages C & D - Appraisal of the social, economic and environmental effects of the plan (SA Report) and Consulting on the plan and the SA Report
Main Modifications	Plan for Stafford Borough Part 2 – Main Modifications Sustainability Appraisal Addendum (P2-Q4)	Stages C & D - Appraisal of the social, economic and environmental effects of the plan (SA Report) and Consulting on the plan and the SA Report
Adoption	SA Adoption Statement	Stage E - Monitoring the implementation of the plan

Following a staged production process allows the findings from the SA process at each stage to be fed into the next iteration of the Plan. This ensured the robustness and sustainability of the Plan, as any potential issues were raised and addressed during the Plan production.

The process was further strengthened by on-going consultation. Each SA document was released for consultation alongside the associated Plan production document, allowing stakeholders to comment on any key sustainability issues.

3. How the Sustainability Appraisal reports have been taken into account

At each Plan making stage the SA process predicts the impacts and implications of the boundary proposals and each individual policy. Each aspect of the Plan was evaluated against the SA Framework to establish how well it performed in sustainability terms.

The Plan for Stafford Borough Part 2 – Publication Sustainability Appraisal Report (P2-A19) sets out the full details of how the SA process and outputs were taken into account. A brief summary is provided below.

Local Plan Stage	Related SA document and Examination Library Reference	SA/SEA Influence
Prior to commencement	SA Scoping Report (P2-G24)	The Scoping Report established the SA framework which would be applied throughout the SA process. It also identified baseline data to be used as the basis for prediction and monitoring of environmental and other sustainability effects.
Proposals (options stage)	Plan for Stafford Borough Part 2 – Proposals Sustainability Appraisal Report (P2-G21)	<p>The SA assessed the reasonable alternatives for two elements of the Plan: Policy RET1 – Retail Boundaries; and the proposed policy approach to not allocating an additional site for eight pitches for gypsies, travellers and travelling show people but to leave this to windfall applications, against the SA objectives.</p> <p>It should be noted that the relationship between the adopted Plan for Stafford Borough and the Plan for Stafford Borough Part 2 meant that the number of options that could be identified for Part 2 was limited.</p> <p>Following the assessment of these alternatives it was decided not to include a policy which related to retail frontages or the allocation of sites for gypsies, travellers and travelling show people within the Plan. Furthermore it was decided not to include a policy on Protected Local Green Spaces in the context of the SA and its findings.</p>

<p>Publication</p>	<p>Plan for Stafford Borough Part 2 – Publication document Sustainability Appraisal Report (P2-A19)</p>	<p>The SA of the Publication version of the Plan recommended that no policies changes should be made to the Plan.</p> <p>The SA identified that a small number of significant positive effects are likely to arise. However as there were no significant negative effects identified there is no need for a separate monitoring framework to be prepared. Therefore the framework for monitoring potential effects on all the SA objectives through the adopted Plan for Stafford Borough will help to identify any trends arising from implementation of Part 2 of the Plan.</p>
<p>Main Modifications</p>	<p>Plan for Stafford Borough Part 2 – Main Modifications Sustainability Appraisal Addendum (P2-Q4)</p>	<p>The SA considered the three proposed main modifications to the Plan. Two of the modifications would not affect the findings of the Publication document Sustainability Appraisal Report. Whilst the likely effect remain unchanged for most of the SA objectives concerning the settlement boundary changes at Westbridge Park, Stone, additional minor negative effects have arisen for social and economic objectives. Although it is noted that the boundary amendment only affects a small area of land in relation to the rest of the Borough, the impact on delivering the retail and leisure provision at Stone could be significant. The cumulative effects on economic objectives is not mixed minor positive and negative, whilst the social and environmental objectives are unchanged.</p>

4. How opinions expressed through public consultation have been taken into account

The Regulations require that Local Authorities consult stakeholders at various stages of the SA process. Stafford Borough Council made all Sustainability Appraisal documents available for public comment at each stage of the Plan making process.

The following organisations and individuals responded to the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report:

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

No organisations or individuals responded to the Plan for Stafford Borough Part 2 – Proposals Sustainability Appraisal Report.

The following organisations and individuals responded to the Plan for Stafford Borough Part 2 – Publication document Sustainability Appraisal Report :

- Milwood Ltd
- Gladman Developments

No organisations or individuals responded to the Plan for Stafford Borough Part 2 – Main Modifications Sustainability Appraisal Addendum.

Details of the responses to these SA documents can be viewed in Appendix 4 of the Plan for Stafford Borough Part 2 – Adoption Sustainability Appraisal Report. This section also shows any changes which were made to the Sustainability Appraisal as a result of comments received.

Details of the responses to these SA documents can be viewed at www.staffordbc.gov.uk/part2.

In addition, Stafford Borough Council has prepared a Submission Consultation Statement (P2-A20 in the Examination library) which sets out how consultation was carried out throughout the production of the Plan for Stafford Borough. It explains who was consulted, how they were consulted and a summary of their comments, and any changes made to the Plan in light of these.

5. Reasons for choosing the Plan for Stafford Borough: Part 2 as adopted in light of other reasonable alternatives considered

The SA process was used throughout the development of the Plan for Stafford Borough: Part 2 to help guide decisions on which options were taken forward in the context of the policies. The adopted Part 2 document reflects the most sustainable and deliverable approach to future development within the Borough, when judged against the other alternatives considered.

The range of reasonable alternatives considered was mainly dictated by national objectives, and the relationship between the adopted Plan for Stafford Borough and the Plan for Stafford Borough Part 2 which meant the number of options that could be identified for Part 2 was limited. Further details are contained in Section 3.

The Council is confident that all alternative options have been appraised in the production of the Plan for Stafford Borough: Part 2 as adopted.

6. Monitoring

The Regulations require Local Authorities to monitor the likely significant effects of the implementation of the Plan. The purpose of monitoring is to address both likely significant impacts and unforeseen effects of implementation of the Plan, to enable appropriate remedial action if unexpected negative effects occur.

The Plan for Stafford Borough sets out, in Appendix E, a comprehensive monitoring framework for the policies in the Plan. The monitoring framework set out in the Plan for Stafford Borough corresponds with that of the SA monitoring framework detailed in section 6.1 of the Revised Sustainability Appraisal Report associated with the adopted Plan for Stafford Borough. Therefore there is no need for a separate monitoring framework to be prepared for Part 2 as the framework for monitoring potential effects on all the SA objectives through the adopted Plan for Stafford Borough will help to identify any trends arising from implementation of Part 2 of the Plan for Stafford Borough.

The performance of the Plan and its policies will be assessed annually against the monitoring framework and reported in the borough's Authority Monitoring Report. The monitoring reports will be made available on the Council's website.

7. Habitats Regulations Assessment

On 13 July 2015 the Borough Council received a letter from Natural England stating that the need for further Habitats Regulations Assessment can be screened out i.e. no further HRA is required. The reason for this approach is that the adopted Plan for Stafford Borough (June 2014) was subject to a robust Habitats Regulations Assessment and contains specific environmental policies to address these requirements. Part 2 of the Plan does not include any significant new development within the settlement boundaries so therefore no further assessment is required.

8. Conclusion

This Sustainability Appraisal Adoption Statement has been prepared to fulfil the Council's obligations under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

As detailed within this Statement, Stafford Borough Council has fully complied with the SA, SEA and HRA requirements in producing the Plan for Stafford Borough: Part 2.

9. Appendix 1

All references are to sections of the Plan for Stafford Borough Part 2 – Publication document Sustainability Appraisal Report (P2-A19 in the Examination library).

Environmental Report: Compliance with the requirements of the SEA Directive	
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. The information to be given is (Art. 5 and Annex 1):	Plan for Stafford Borough Part 2 – Publication document Sustainability Appraisal Report.
a) An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme, and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes.	Sections 1 and 3, Appendix 1.
b) The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme.	Section 3 and Appendix 2.
c) The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected.	Section 3 and Appendix 2.
d) 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.	Section 3 and Appendix 2.
e) 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.	Appendix 1.
f) 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).	Section 4 and 5.
g) 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.	Section 5 and 6.
h) 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.	Section 2.

<p>i) A description of measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Art. 10.</p>	<p>Section 6.</p>
<p>j) A non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings.</p>	<p>Non technical summary (preceding Section 1)</p>
<p>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 (Art. 5.2).</p>	<p>Addressed throughout this SA Report.</p>
<p>Consultation: authorities with environmental responsibility, when deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information which must be included in the environmental/sustainability appraisal report (Art. 5.4)</p>	<p>Consultation on the SA Scoping Report regarding the Plan for Stafford Borough was undertaken in Autumn 2007.</p>
<p>authorities with environmental, social or economic 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 / sustainability appraisal report before the adoption of the plan or programme (Art. 6.1, 6.2)</p>	<p>Consultation on the Plan for Stafford Borough Part 2 Proposals document and accompanying SA Report was undertaken in summer 2015. Comments on the Plan were considered by SBC and influenced the publication version. No comments were received on the SA Report.</p> <p>Consultation was then undertaken in relation to the Plan for Stafford Borough Part 2 Publication document</p>

	<p>between 26th November 2015 and 12 noon on Monday 25th January 2016. Two consultation responses were received on the SA Report and these have been summarised in Appendix 4 along with an explanation as to how these have been addressed as relevant in this updated version of the SA Report which is being submitted alongside the Plan.</p>
<p>other EU Member States, where the implementation of the plan or programme is likely to have significant effects on the environment of that country (Art. 7).</p>	<p>Not applicable</p>
<p>Taking the environmental / sustainability appraisal report and the results of the consultations into account in decision-making (Art. 8)</p>	<p>This Sustainability Appraisal Adoption Report</p>
<p>When the plan or programme is adopted, the public and any countries consulted under Art.7 must be informed and the following made available to those so informed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the plan or programme as adopted • a statement summarising how environmental, social and economic considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme and how the environmental/sustainability appraisal report of Article 5, the opinions expressed pursuant to Article 6 and the results of consultations entered into pursuant to Art. 7 have been taken into account in accordance with Art. 8, and the reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and • the measures decided concerning monitoring (Art. 9) 	<p>This Sustainability Appraisal Adoption Statement</p>

<p>Monitoring of the significant environmental, social and economic effects of the plan's or programme's implementation (Art. 10)</p>	<p>To be addressed after the Plan for Stafford Borough Part 2 is adopted and included in the Authority Monitoring Report</p>
<p>Quality assurance: environmental/sustainability appraisal reports should be of a sufficient standard to meet the requirements of the SEA Directive</p>	<p>This report has been produced in line with current guidance and good practice for SEA / SA and this table demonstrates where the requirements of the SEA Directive have been met.</p>