



Listening Learning Leading

Proposed Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report Non-Technical Summary

Local Plan: Sites and General Policies

April 2013

Part of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan

Introduction

1. We published our first Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Scoping Report in June 2006. Since this time, a number of plans and strategies that have an influence on this scoping report, and more pertinently the SA objectives contained within it, have been published. It is important to ensure that these new plans and strategies are fully reflected within our SA framework we have therefore produced the updated version to take account of this. The scoping report was last updated in March 2009.
2. The SA framework in this scoping report was used to assess the council's adopted core strategy. As the sustainability challenges facing the district have not changed significantly since 2009 and to prevent duplication of work, the council has not changed the SA framework for the Local Plan: Sites and General Policies (referred to as the local plan is the scoping report). It is still considered 'fit for purpose'. This will however be tested further as the SA progresses.
3. The sustainability challenges facing the district are shown in Table 1 below. The sustainability objectives are shown in Table 2 below.
4. The updated scoping report sets out the procedure which the council intends to follow when carrying out SA of the local plan. The council needs to ensure that the local plan is, being prepared under the provisions of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (the Act), and complies with the statutory requirements for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Sustainability Appraisal. .
5. A European Union Directive sets out certain statutory requirements for formal consultation on this Scoping Report and this includes seeking the views of the Environment Agency, Natural England (which has replaced English Nature and The Countryside Agency) and English Heritage. In addition to this we will also consult other groups and bodies that have social, environmental and economic interests and expertise. .

What is SEA/SA?

6. SEA involves the systematic identification and evaluation of the environmental impacts of a strategic action (e.g. a plan or programme). In 2001 the European Union adopted Directive 2001/42/EC (the Directive) which requires the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment. This came into force in the UK in July 2004 and applies to the plans and programmes of the Council's Local Plan.

7. The Directive provides a legally-binding assessment process which the Council must follow, and the process is carried into UK law in the Act and in the “Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.” This report sets out the legal requirements of the Directive in green shaded text boxes and explains how these have been (or will be) satisfied. The council has to prepare an ‘Environmental Report’ for each part of the local plan which records the findings of the SEA undertaken on the local plan.
8. SA is a process which tests the extent to which a local plan promotes sustainable development. Under the provisions of the Act the Council must prepare a broader ‘Sustainability Appraisal Report’ (SA Report) testing the economic and social as well as the environmental implications of the local plan. SA is a statutory requirement for Local Plans along with SEA.
9. The Council publishes a 3-year work programme in its Local Development Scheme giving details of the parts of the local plan it intends to prepare and the Scheme can be viewed on the council’s website. .
10. In preparing the local plan we shall also decide whether “Appropriate Assessment” is required under European Directive 92/43/EEC – the Habitats Directive. This Directive requires the maintenance or restoration of wildlife habitats and species of interest to the European Union at a favourable condition. In South Oxfordshire we currently have four Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) which are protected in this way. We shall carry out appropriate assessment at Stage B and at subsequent stages of the SA process.

Sustainability challenges facing South Oxfordshire

11. Table 1 below lists the environmental, social and economic challenges facing South Oxfordshire together with evidence of the challenges. It is not an exhaustive list, but it includes those where in future the planning system may contribute towards their solution or amelioration.

Table 1 South Oxfordshire's Sustainability Challenges

Sustainability problem	Evidence of the problem
Environmental challenges	
1	<p>Landscape deterioration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In some areas of South Oxfordshire the condition of the landscape has deteriorated and is in need of repair, restoration or reconstruction. (<i>South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment: SODC, 2003</i>) Large-scale development on the edge of settlements is potentially inappropriate within the rural and unspoilt landscape of South Oxfordshire. (<i>South Oxfordshire Landscape Character Assessment: SODC, 2003</i>).
2	<p>Loss of biodiversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges to Oxfordshire's habitats and species which are leading to continuing biodiversity loss include increasing fragmentation of habitats, a changing climate and the many demands on our land (biodiversity, food, energy, recreation and housing). (<i>Oxfordshire's Biodiversity Action Plan: ONCF, 2010</i>)
3	<p>Road traffic congestion and consequent adverse environmental, economic and safety impacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traffic in Oxfordshire grew by 14% between 1991 and 2000 and overall daily car traffic could grow by 28% to 2011 and 35% to 2021. At peak times traffic congestion occurs around major road junctions and town centres. 66% of the resident population of South Oxfordshire travel to work by car (either as passenger or driver) which is significantly higher than the national average. Rat-running to avoid congestion can lead to a greater risk of accidents occurring. (Baseline data in Appendix 3 and draft <i>Local Transport Plan for Oxfordshire 2006/11</i>)
4	<p>Flood risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are approximately 21,000 properties at risk from river flooding in Oxfordshire, with around 8,500 at significant risk. Oxfordshire has 12% of its land area within the floodplain (<i>The Environment in Oxfordshire, The Environment Agency, 2009</i>).
5	<p>Risk of drought</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The South East is one of the driest areas of the country. It receives an average rainfall of 728 mm/year, compared to 906 mm/year in England and Wales. (<i>South East Region Drought Plan, The Environment Agency, January 2012</i>)

6	Climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate change is the most severe problem we are facing. We need to act to reduce greenhouse gas emissions significantly - at home, at work and when travelling. (<i>Securing the Future: Delivering UK Sustainable development strategy</i>, DEFRA 2005). Little progress is being made in reducing CO₂ emissions and those from the transport sector are increasing significantly. There is also slow progress being made in the development of renewable energy resources. (Baseline data in Appendix 3) Oxfordshire's main areas of climate-related vulnerability are increasing intense downpours and higher temperatures. (Oxfordshire Sustainable Community Strategy, Briefing Paper 6: Environment, 2007) The South east is particularly vulnerable to climate change, with low lying areas close to the sea and low average levels of rainfall. The South East has already recently experienced ten of the hottest summers on record and also some of the heaviest rainfall events. (<i>State of the Environment – South East England February 2010</i>)
7	Energy Consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic energy consumption and CO₂ emissions in South Oxfordshire are higher than the Oxfordshire, South East and UK averages (<i>DTI, sub-regional high level energy indicators, February 2009</i>)
Social challenges		
8	Shortage of affordable and the cost of general market housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing need in the district is very high. After re-let and resale supply there is a net need prior to new delivery for 621 new affordable units a year, based on dealing with the backlog over 18 years (remainder of plan period). (<i>South Oxfordshire Housing Needs Assessment Update – Final Report DCA 2011</i>) Average house prices in South Oxfordshire are consistently higher than the averages for Oxfordshire and the South East region. (Baseline data in Appendix 2). 93% of concealed households forming will not be able to afford a deposit for 1 bed flat without significant parental assistance (<i>South Oxfordshire Housing Needs Assessment Update – Final Report DCA 2011</i>)
9	Lack of appropriate size of housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main shortfall in both the affordable and general market housing sectors is for two bedroom accommodation. (<i>South Oxfordshire Housing Needs Assessment, DCA 2011</i>)
10	Social and economic costs of an ageing population.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Oxfordshire's population is predicted to have a growing proportion of older people and fewer younger people. (Baseline data in Appendix 2)
11	Social exclusion caused by poor access to services and jobs in the rural areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In a rural district such as South Oxfordshire access to services can be difficult for people who rely on public transport. (<i>South Oxfordshire's Sustainable Community Strategy 2009 - 2026</i>)
12	Lack of indoor and outdoor community sports facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on identified need the (indicative) total capital investment required in the district is £22.9m (including replacement of Didcot leisure facility) (<i>Leisure and Sports Facility Strategy SODC March 2011</i>)

13	Fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.	Despite relatively low levels of crime, community safety has consistently been a priority for local people and anti-social behaviour remains a major concern. (<i>South and Vale Community Safety Partnership Rolling Annual Plan 2012 - 13</i>)
Economic challenges		
14	Pockets of deprivation in an otherwise affluent area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Oxfordshire is one of the least deprived local authorities in the UK, ranking 307 out of 354 authorities where rank 1 is the most deprived (Index of Deprivation 2010). The most deprived super output areas are Berinsfield and Didcot (Northbourne and Park). Low income levels are a significant component of deprivation in these areas. (Baseline data in Appendix 2)
15	Ageing resident population structure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ageing population structure will result in a fall in the size of the local workforce which will impact adversely on recruitment by businesses. (Baseline data in Appendix 2)
16	Workforce skills in the resident working age population.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skill shortages are an obstacle to business success. (baseline data in Appendix 3), Our Place, Our Future SODC SCS 2009-2026).
17	Road traffic congestion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are over 4,000 kilometres of road in Oxfordshire. The majority of these operate satisfactorily but there are a number of locations where the network is under stress. (<i>Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan 2011 - 2030</i> and baseline data in Appendix 3)
18	The availability of sufficient housing and its high cost.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Oxfordshire's average house price is 14% above the Oxfordshire average and 30% above the average for for the South East. This has led to severe affordability problems (<i>Oxfordshire Local Area Agreement 2005</i> and baseline data in Appendix 2)
19	Investment in the infrastructure necessary to support future growth in housing and economic development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NPPF highlights the importance of infrastructure delivery. It is identified as part of the economic dimension to sustainable development. Para 21 states that planning policies should recognise and seek to address barriers to investment including infrastructure.
20	Threats to the vitality and viability of town and village centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The vitality and viability of town and village centres in South Oxfordshire is being challenged. The threats to these centres include changing patterns of consumer spending and travel, increasing competition from larger town centres and relocation of businesses to out-of-centre locations (SODC Retail and Leisure Needs Assessment, 2010), Our Place, Our Future Draft SODC SCS 2009 - 2026).

Developing the SA Framework

12. Table 2 below contains 18 sustainability objectives which we propose to continue to use in the SA Framework and describes whether each objective addresses social, economic or environmental matters or a combination of these.

13. The far right hand column shows where the objectives sit with the local priorities and aims in the South Oxfordshire Partnership's "South Oxfordshire Community Strategy 2004-2009" (SOCS) and the strategic objectives in the Council's own "South Oxfordshire Performance Plan 2005/06" (SOPP) were important sources of objectives for the sustainability appraisal of the district. The updated version of the scoping report has taken account of the objectives contained within the "South Oxfordshire Sustainable Community Strategy 2009 – 2026" (SOSCS), the "South Oxfordshire Corporate Plan – The Way Ahead 2012/2016" (SOCP) and the "Oxfordshire 2030 Community Strategy" (OCP) along with all the other updated plans, policies and programmes scoped in the main SA scoping report.

Table 2 - Sustainability Objectives

	DRAFT SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVES FOR SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE'S SA FRAMEWORK	SOC	ENV	ECON	MAIN SOURCE OF OBJECTIVE
1	To help to provide existing and future residents with the opportunity to live in a decent home.	✓			SOSCS,, SOCP and OCP
2	To help to create safe places for people to use and for businesses to operate, to reduce anti-social behaviour and reduce crime and the fear of crime.	✓		✓	SOSCS, SOCP and OCP
3	To improve accessibility for everyone to health, education, recreation, cultural and community facilities and services.	✓			SOSCS, SOCP and OCP
4	To maintain and improve people's health, well-being and community cohesion and support voluntary, community and faith groups.	✓			SOSCS , SOCP and OCP
5	To reduce harm to the environment by seeking to minimise pollution of all kinds.	✓	✓	✓	SOSCS, ,SOCP and OCP
6	To improve travel choice and accessibility, reduce the need for travel by car and shorten the length and duration of journeys.	✓	✓	✓	LTP3
7	To conserve and enhance biodiversity.	✓	✓		SOSCS and OCP
8	To protect and enhance the District's open spaces and countryside and in particular, those areas designated for their landscape importance.	✓	✓	✓	SOSCS and OCP
9	To protect and enhance the District's historic environment including archaeological resources and to ensure that new development is of a high quality design and reinforces local distinctiveness.	✓	✓	✓	SOSCS and OCP
10	To seek to address the causes and effects of climate change by: a) securing sustainable building practices which conserve energy, water resources and materials; and b) maximising the proportion of energy	✓	✓	✓	SOSCS, SOCP and OCP

	generated from renewable sources. c) ensuring that the design and location of new development is resilient to the effects of climate change				
11	To reduce the risk of flooding and resulting detriment to public well-being, the economy and the environment.	✓	✓	✓	SOSCS and OCP
12	To seek to minimise waste generation and encourage the re-use of waste through recycling, composting or energy recovery.		✓		SOSCS and, SOCP
13	To improve efficiency in land use and reduce development pressure on the countryside and natural resources/material assets, such as landscape, minerals, biodiversity and soil quality.		✓		SOSCS ,
14	To ensure high and stable levels of employment and facilitate inward investment within the district.	✓		✓	SOSCS and, SOCP
15	To assist in the development of: a) a strong, innovative and knowledge-based economy that delivers high-value-added, sustainable, low-impact activities; and b) small firms, particularly those that maintain and enhance the rural economy. c) thriving economies in market towns and villages			✓	SOSCS and SOCP
16	To assist in the development of a skilled workforce to support the long term competitiveness of the district by raising education achievement levels and encouraging the development of the skills needed for everyone to find and remain in work.	✓		✓	SOSCS
17	To encourage the development of a buoyant, sustainable tourism sector.			✓	SOCP and OCP
18	Support community involvement in decisions affecting them and enable communities to provide local services and solutions.	✓			SOSCS and, SOCP

SA in the production of the local plan

14. A new local plan can contain its own planning objectives and the guidance states that these should be tested for compatibility with the objectives in the SA framework. The council will carry out this task as the SA progresses. Reasonable options for the Local Plan: Sites and General Policies will be tested against the objectives listed in Table 2 above to understand the sustainability of each option.

هذه الوثيقة متاحة باللغة العربية عند الطلب
Arabic

এই ডকুমেন্ট অনুরোধে বাংলায় পাওয়া যায়।
Bengali

ਇਹ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਮੰਗ ਕੇ ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਲਿਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ।
Punjabi

درخواست پر یہ دستاویز اردو میں بھی مل سکتی ہے۔
Urdu

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Chinese

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