

Technical note:

South Oxfordshire Local Plan – Addendum to Sustainability Appraisal

1. Background

National planning policy¹ states that local plans should be prepared with the objective of contributing to sustainable development². Sustainable development is that which seeks to secure net gains across economic, environmental and social objectives to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The South Oxfordshire Local Plan should contribute to a sustainable future for the plan area. To support this objective, the Council is required to carry out a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Local Plan³. SA is a way of ensuring that the likely social, economic and environmental effects of the Local Plan are identified, described and appraised. It also incorporates⁴ an assessment required under UK regulations⁵ called Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). Where negative effects are identified, measures are proposed to avoid, minimise or mitigate such effects. Where any positive effects are identified, measures are considered that could enhance such effects. SA is therefore an integral part of the preparation of the Local Plan and has been undertaken at all of the key stages in the development of the Local Plan.

Wood Environment and Infrastructure Solutions Ltd (Wood) (formerly Amec Foster Wheeler) was appointed by the Council to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Draft Local Plan, informed by a review of previous SA work undertaken by the Council.

The following SA documents have been produced during the preparation of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan:

- South Oxfordshire Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report, 2014;
- South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031 Interim SA Refined Options, February 2015;
- SA Report of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan Preferred Options Stage Three of the Process, June 2016;
- SA Report of the South Oxfordshire Local Plan Preferred Options 2 Stage Four of the Process, March 2017;
- SA Report of the Publication version the South Oxfordshire Local Plan, October 2017;
- SA Report for the second Publication version of the Local Plan, January 2019;
- SA Report of the Submission version of the Local Plan, March 2019; and

¹ See paragraph 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019).

² This is a legal requirement of local planning authorities exercising their plan-making functions (section 39(2) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004)

³ The requirement for SA of local plans is set out under section 19(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

⁴ See paragraph 32 of the National Planning Policy Framework (Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019).

⁵ Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (statutory instrument 2004 No. 1633).

- Addendum to the Sustainability Appraisal Report of the Submission Version of the Local Plan – Appraisal of Proposed Main Modifications (MM), September 2020.

The SA has considered:

- ten strategic options (including the preferred option);
- six growth options;
- four growth options to respond to housing need in the wider housing market area;
- two options for accommodating growth at Didcot and eight sites;
- 15 strategic sites (and a further two combined options) to accommodate growth;
- five strategic scenarios for different combinations of strategic sites (including two scenarios with a total of five variants);
- two options for growth at Henley on Thames;
- five site options for locating housing growth at Nettlebed;
- eleven site options for travelling communities;
- the policies contained in the various drafts of the local plan.

Consultation on MMs and the accompanying SA Report was undertaken in July and August 2020. The Inspector then issued his final report in November 2020. The final report included further changes to the MMs.

This final addendum to the SA Report of the Submission Version of the Local Plan considers the comments made on the SA that accompanied the main modifications and whether or not any further changes to the SA Report are required. It also considers the further changes to modifications made by the Inspector and screens them for likely significant effects.

2. Comments on the SA addendum accompanying the MMs

Representations from 9 separate respondents to the SA Addendum accompanying the MMs were received. One developer for an omission site in Goring objected to the consideration in the SA addendum of changes to Policy H4. Otherwise, the comments of objection largely concerned the SA's assessment of Policy STRAT7: Land at Chalgrove Airfield. A number of respondents disagreed with the conclusions of the assessment criteria, particularly regarding SA objectives 3 (access to facilities), 6 (transport), 8 (land use) and 13 (economic development).

Two respondents supported the SA's assessment conclusions. Highways England stated that they remain supportive of the inclusion of SA objective 6 (transport) and the conclusions of the assessment of policies INF1, TRANS4 and DES1. Another respondent agreed with the SA's overall conclusion that the proposed MMs do not impact on the previous conclusions of the SA.

Wood has reviewed the comments and concluded that the responses do not have any implications for the findings of the SA.

3. Screening the further changes to the MMs

The further changes to the MMs made by the Inspector have been screened for likely significant effects and the results are set out in **Table 3.1**. No significant effects have been identified associated with the MMs and no further SA work is needed in response to the MMs made by the Inspector Post Consultation.

4. Conclusions

Consultation on MMs and the accompanying SA Report was undertaken in July and August 2020. The Inspector then issued his final report in November 2020. The final report included further changes to the MMs. A screening assessment has been undertaken and no further SA is needed.

The SA has concluded that overall, the implementation of the Local Plan policies would have positive effects on the district. This reflects the likely socio-economic benefits associated with the delivery of housing, employment and community facilities, services and infrastructure in the district over the plan period. Negative effects have also been identified, largely associated with the construction and operation of the new development. The Local Plan provides a strong, coherent policy framework to plan positively for growth, build resilience, manage negative effects and help to conserve and enhance the district's natural and built environment and resources.

Table 3.1 Screening further changes to the Main Modifications

Main Modification (MM)	Further Change	Are there implications for the SA arising from the change to the MM?
MM5	Policy STRAT2: the reinstatement of the period for meeting Oxford's unmet housing need of 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2035, to ensure that the policy is clear and effective.	No – the addition of the plan period into the policy does not impact on the findings of the SA.
MM12	Policy STRAT9: The main modification to paragraph 4(iv) to add a requirement to consider the setting of Oxford was not taken forward. The Inspector stated that as Oxford's historic centre was over 6 miles from the site, this requirement is not relevant and therefore was not recommended as a main modification.	No – the deletion of this requirement does not impact on the findings of the SA.
MM16	STRAT12: the addition of words to ensure that the potential for noise from nearby industrial operations is considered in the masterplanning process, as discussed in the relevant hearing session.	No – the addition of the requirement does not impact on the findings of the SA.
MM17	STRAT13: in part 3, the re-instatement of the words "expected to deliver" to ensure consistency with other policies. In addition, slight re-wording is required to paragraph 4.115 for clarity.	No – the re-instatement of the wording does not impact on the findings of the SA.
MM18	STRAT14: an adjustment in the wording of 2(vii) to seek carbon reduction and renewable energy on this site where compatible with the planning permission.	No – the addition of the wording does not impact on the findings of the SA.
MM47	EMP11: the deletion of the part of the policy referring to well-designed new buildings; this is no longer relevant because it related to towns and villages which the MM deletes from this policy (it is covered elsewhere in the Plan).	No – the deletion of this wording does not impact on the findings of the SA.
MM53	ENV1 supporting text paragraph 8.10: the deletion of the second sentence requiring all developments to include a wide range of large canopied trees because this is impractical for many developments. The first part is extended to refer to the need for compatibility with other considerations including heritage protection, landscape character, residential amenity, the need to make the best use of land, and habitat protection.	No – the amendment to supporting text does not impact on the findings of the SA.

Main Modification (MM)	Further Change	Are there implications for the SA arising from the change to the MM?
MM57	ENV6: the replacement of the requirement that development “must demonstrate that” it protects, conserves and/or enhances heritage assets with a requirement that reflects the duties towards heritage assets and is based on the NPPF wording. This is not a devaluation of the approach towards heritage assets, but a recognition that not all development can protect, conserve or enhance all heritage assets, and it is required for consistency with the NPPF and Policies ENV7 and ENV8. This was an issue discussed in initial questions.	No - the amendment to the wording does not impact on the findings of the SA.
MM63	DES1, new part 3: the insertion of the words “adjacent or closely related” to clarify the scope of the requirement for a masterplan to cover more than one site. It is not expected that this requirement would be appropriate for, for example, the three strategic allocations adjacent to Oxford.	No - the amendment to the wording does not impact on the findings of the SA.
MM71	DES11: the deletion of the words “or future equivalent legislation” because the policy cannot pre-judge what this will be, and its replacement with a statement that the policy will be reviewed in the light of future legislation or national guidance. In addition, the policy should not be confined to on-site renewable solutions; the scope for using off-site technology (such as biogas sources) should be allowed for in the policy.	No - the amendment to the wording does not impact on the findings of the SA.
MM74	TC2, part 6: the deletion of “to retail development locations”; part 7, the replacement of “subject to a retail impact assessment” with “subject to an impact assessment appropriate to the use”.	No - the amendment to the wording does not impact on the findings of the SA.
MM76	TC5: a reference in part 2 bullet 1 to E Class uses rather than retail purposes to be consistent with the MM. Part 3 should refer to main town centre uses rather than retail and service uses to be consistent with the NPPF paragraph 86.	No - the amendment to the wording does not impact on the findings of the SA.
MM77	CF1: the reference in the policy and monitoring sections of 1,000 metres instead of 1,000 square metres.	Yes – the Post Adoption Statement should reflect the amended indicator. The amendment to the wording does not impact on the findings of the SA.

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