

# **HAMBLETON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

### **DEVELOPMENT POLICIES DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT**

#### **THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF PLANS AND PROGRAMMES REGULATIONS 2004**

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT**

##### **(SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL/STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT)**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Hambleton District Council adopted its Development Policies Development Plan Document on 26 February 2008. The Development Policies Document is the second DPD to be adopted by Hambleton, the Core Strategy being the first in April 2007. The Core Strategy has provided the context for all the Council's subsequent Development Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents.
  
- 1.2 As part of the adoption procedures under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, regulation 16 (3) and (4) requires a Statement to be produced on the adoption of any plan or programme to which the Regulations apply. The Regulations specify that the Statement should explain how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme; how the environmental report has been taken into account; how public consultation responses have been taken into account; why the plan or programme has been adopted rather than the other options considered; and finally, how the significant environmental effects of implementing the plan or programme will be monitored.

## **2. Key Environmental Bodies**

Throughout the process of carrying out a Sustainability Appraisal of the Local Development Framework documents, including the Core Strategy, three key bodies are required to be consulted - the Environment Agency, English Heritage and Natural England (formerly English Nature and the Countryside Agency). During the Sustainability Appraisal, comments from these bodies in particular have shaped the Appraisal and have been fed into the Assessment of Options and Preferred Options and the formulation of the Development Plan Documents up to and including submission.

## **3. Integrating Environmental Considerations into the Development Policies Development Plan Document**

In the course of their preparation, all the Hambleton Development Plan Documents have been subject to a five-stage external Sustainability Appraisal by Land Use Consultants starting with the Core Strategy. The Core Strategy Appraisal began with a Stage 1 report in 2004 and a Scoping Report in 2005 following new statutory requirements, including the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Sustainability Appraisal was undertaken at the subsequent Core Strategy stages of Issues and Options, Preferred Options and Final Submission prior to adoption. The Development Policies Development Plan Document was required to be in conformity with the Core Strategy; indeed it is intended to provide policies focusing on implementation of the Core Strategy and include restrictive development control policies only where appropriate. The Sustainability Appraisals of the Development Policies and Core Strategy therefore have many common characteristics, and the conclusions of the Development Policies Sustainability Appraisal follow closely those of the Core Strategy.

## **4. Taking the Environmental Report into Account**

Arising out of the ongoing Sustainability Appraisal, a number of changes have been made by the Council through the options development and other processes, including improving base line

information by undertaking background studies, defining more specific targets and amending development policies in various ways such as adding, deleting or refining criteria.

#### **4.1 Issues and Options**

At the Issues and Options stage, one or more alternative options (including a 'do nothing' one) were considered alongside each Development Policy in addressing the future spatial planning of the District and a Sustainability Appraisal of the Options was initiated. The range of "reasonable policy options" that might exist was informed by the relevant Core Policy and the need to conform to the Core Strategy. The Sustainability Appraisal concluded that the Options were appropriate alternatives in the context of Hambleton District.

#### **4.2 Preferred Options**

Comprehensive consideration by the Council of the Issues and Options, including responses from stakeholders and the wider community consultation, led to the formulation and publication of Development Policies Preferred Options in January/February 2006.

4.3 Sustainability Appraisal of each option was undertaken against the Sustainability Appraisal criteria in order to identify whether the selected policies met the aims of the criteria and whether there was any potential conflict. It was not always possible to appraise all alternatives to the policies, mainly because of the need for more detail to characterise the alternative policy options and allow for a meaningful appraisal.

4.4 Sustainability Appraisal of the Preferred Options highlighted elements of them which were clearly sustainable and should be maintained (e.g. in promoting the prudent use of natural resources and maintaining or enhancing landscape and townscape quality). It also highlighted any tensions between elements of the Development Policies Preferred Options and the Sustainability Appraisal Objectives (for instance

potential effects on bio-diversity of brownfield sites and potential effects on efforts to minimise the effects of climate change). The Appraisal demonstrated that few such tensions existed in reality between the Development Policies and sustainability objectives and that where they did exist, they could be largely overcome through re-wording or additional clarification of the policy. The final version of the Sustainability Appraisal accompanying the submission Development Policies Development Plan Document listed both positive and negative aspects of the Plan. No significant negative effects were identified but some recommendations were made for strengthening the Development Policies DPD and its policies (See Sustainability Appraisal Report Section 5: Appraisal of Development Policies DPD and Table 5.3: Summary Effects).

## **5. Monitoring of the Sustainability Appraisal and the Development Policies**

- 5.1 The Local Development Framework for Hambleton District is to be kept under continuous review by means of an Annual Monitoring Report submitted to Government Office. The Annual Monitoring Report makes provision for monitoring the sustainability of the Core Strategy and associated Development Plan Documents as they are adopted and implemented during the period of the Local Development Framework up to 2021. The Sustainability Appraisal incorporates a framework for monitoring a number of key effects of the Development Policies DPD including the impact of development on landscape and townscape quality; effects on bio-diversity and geology; effects on climate change; effects on the economy; and impact on housing needs. (See Sustainability Appraisal Report Section 6: Monitoring Proposals and Table 6.1: Proposals for monitoring the sustainability effects of implementing the Development Policies DPD).
- 5.2 Cumulative effects are also to be taken into account whether positive or negative. So far as the Development Policies DPD is concerned, given its strategic level, it is difficult to be precise about when and in

what form the effects will arise. More detail will be provided when the Allocations DPD is prepared. The Sustainability Appraisal concludes that most of the effects will be permanent (although some will clearly not be) and effects are likely to increase over time. (See para 5.93 of the Sustainability Appraisal Report of the Submission Development Policies Development Plan Document).

## **6. Development Policies DPD – Public Examination of the Sustainability Appraisal**

- 6.1 The Council's Sustainability Appraisal was subject to Soundness Test 3 by a Planning Inspector who undertook a Public Examination of the Development Policies DPD including the Sustainability Appraisal. The Inspector concluded that the likely social, environmental and economic impacts of the Development Policies and the various options considered and discounted have been properly appraised; in particular it was noted that the submitted Development Policies DPD contained references to the conclusions of the Sustainability Appraisal relevant to each main section of the Development Policies document. The Inspector pointed out that though the Sustainability Appraisal work on the Local Development Framework was started before the publication of national guidance, it was in line with current and emerging guidance available at the time. She noted that although there were no designated international wildlife sites in the Development Policies DPD area, a Habitats Regulations Assessment was prepared to assess impact on such sites in adjoining areas. As a result, a number of changes were suggested to the submitted Development Policies DPD which the Council and Natural England agreed and which the Inspector endorsed and required to be made to the final document. The Inspector concluded that the Development Plan Document and its policies had been properly subjected to Sustainability Appraisal and Soundness Test 3 – Sustainability Appraisal had been met.

6.2 Detailed information on the Sustainability Appraisal is available in the Sustainability Appraisal documentation including the final Sustainability Appraisal Report (August 2006).

## **7. Public Consultation**

7.1 The Development Policies DPD has been prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) England Regulations 2004, which require that a DPD is accompanied by a statement regarding consultation. The Development Policies DPD has met those requirements and also complies with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. The Development Policies DPD has, therefore, been through two major stages of consultation - Issues and Options in September/October 2005 and Preferred Options in January/February 2006. A full statement of the Council's pre-submission consultation on the Development Policies DPD is available, dated August 2006. Consultation at these two stages took a variety of forms, including public reports and associated questionnaires; public meetings; features in the Council newspaper, Hambleton News; and the opportunity for face to face meetings with organisations such as young people, disabled groups, the gypsy and travelling community and Age Concern. In addition to documents being published in paper form, they were produced as CDs and were published on the Council's website.

7.2 All the representations received have been considered by the Council and, indeed, the Preferred Options representations were summarised individually in a Schedule of Representations. The response of the Council to the main issues raised is summarised in the Pre-submission Consultation Statement which also indicates how the Council proposed to deal with the issues.

7.3 The Pre-submission Consultation Statement contains a specific section on the Sustainability Appraisal consultation responses. The consultation was carried out during the same six week period as the

Development Policies Preferred Options consultation. Comments were received on the Sustainability Appraisal from two key environmental bodies; the Countryside Agency was wholly supportive of the Sustainability Appraisal process and findings, requiring no further action. English Heritage, however, raised the following concerns about the Sustainability Appraisal Report and appropriate amendments have now been made:

- Conclusions and comments relating to DP38 (Major outdoor recreation) and DP39 (Recreational links) do not coincide (Appendix 6)
- The number of Buildings at Risk is not a good indicator (Table 6.1 Proposals for monitoring)
- Re-development of brownfield land could harm historic remains (DP12 - Delivering housing on brownfield land) (Appendix 6)
- Development could harm landscape character/the setting of buildings (DP28 - Conservation) (Appendix 6).

7.4 Appendix 2 of the Sustainability Appraisal Report sets out changes to the Report in response either to English Heritage's concerns about the Appraisal itself or to changes made to the Development Policies Development Plan Document.