

HAMBLETON DISTRICT COUNCIL

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

**CORE STRATEGY
DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT**

THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF PLANS AND PROGRAMMES
REGULATIONS 2004

ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT

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

1. Introduction

Hambleton District Council adopted its Core Strategy Development Plan Document on 3 April 2007. 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 Core Strategy and the other Local Development Framework documents, 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 Core Strategy up to and including submission.

3. Integrating Environmental Considerations into the Core Strategy

In the course of its preparation, the Hambleton Core Strategy has been subject to a five-stage external Sustainability Appraisal by Land Use Consultants. The 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. Subsequently, Sustainability Appraisal was undertaken of the Core Strategy Issues and Options, a Position Statement at the Preferred Options stage was prepared and a final Sustainability Appraisal was submitted along with the Core Strategy Development Plan Document. At all times the Sustainability Appraisal was carried out in accordance with the requirements of Strategic Environmental Assessment and Appraisal set out in European and UK legislation.

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; setting out sustainability objectives in the Core Strategy; formulating spatial principles which acknowledge the influences of York and Teesside amongst other things; and a clear level of priority for affordable housing.

4.1. Issues and Options

At the Issues and Options stage, many options were considered in addressing the future spatial planning of the District and a Sustainability Appraisal of the options was undertaken of them all. The Sustainability Appraisal concluded that the options were appropriate alternatives in the context of Hambleton District. In particular, the Vision for the District and the Objectives associated with it were endorsed as appropriate by the Sustainability Appraisal. The Sustainability Appraisal also confirmed that none of the other alternatives offered significant benefits over the Preferred Options.

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 Preferred Options. Sustainability Appraisal of the Preferred Options confirmed the appropriateness of the Spatial Strategy for Hambleton based on Areas of Restraint in the north and south of the District and an Area of Opportunity in the middle. A key part of the Spatial Strategy was the Sustainable Settlement Hierarchy and that too was supported by the Sustainability Appraisal. The Strategic Policies underpinning the Spatial Strategy reflected both the ongoing Sustainability Appraisal and inputs from the public consultation at both Issues and Options and Preferred Options stages. The final version of the Sustainability Appraisal accompanying the Submission Core Strategy listed both positive and negative aspects of the Strategy. No significant negative effects were identified but some recommendations were made regarding strengthening the Strategic Spatial Policies by more detailed policies in the Development Policies Development Plan Document.

5. Monitoring of the Sustainability Appraisal and Core Strategy

The Local Development Framework for Hambleton District is to be kept under continuous review. In order for this to happen, an Annual Monitoring Report is required to be submitted to Government Office. The Annual Monitoring Report makes provision for monitoring the sustainability of the Hambleton Core Strategy as it is implemented during the period of the Local Development Framework up to 2021. The Sustainability Appraisal includes a framework for monitoring a number of key effects of the Local Development Framework including: the impact of development on landscape and townscape quality; protection of environmental assets such as biodiversity and heritage; contribution to climate change; effects on the economy; and housing needs. Cumulative effects are also to be taken into account (see Section 7 and Table 6(1) of the Sustainability Report).

6. Core Strategy – Public Examination of the Sustainability Appraisal

The Council's Sustainability Appraisal was subject to Soundness Test 3 by a Planning Inspector who undertook a public examination of the Core Strategy including the Sustainability Appraisal. The Inspector concluded that the main changes to the Core Strategy arising from the Sustainability Appraisal at the Preferred Options stage and including consultees' comments, were addressed by the Council at all stages; in particular it was noted that the submitted Core Strategy contained references to the conclusions of the Sustainability Appraisal relevant to the main sections of the Core Strategy document. The Inspector pointed out that much of the Sustainability Appraisal work on the Core Strategy was carried out before the final versions of national guidance became available but was still fully in line with the guidance available at the time. He also noted that the Appraisal was fully consistent with the latest national sustainability strategy (Securing the Future) and the five guiding principles it contained. The Inspector therefore concluded that the Plan and its policies had been properly subjected to Sustainability Appraisal and Soundness Test 3 on Sustainability Appraisal had been met.

6.1 Further information on the Sustainability Appraisal is, of course, available in the Sustainability Appraisal documentation including the final Sustainability Appraisal Report.

7. Public Consultation

The Core Strategy has been prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004, which require that a Development Plan Document is accompanied by a statement regarding consultation. The Core Strategy has met those requirements and also complies with the Council's Statement of Community Involvement. The Core Strategy has therefore been through two major stages of consultation – an Issues and Options stage in April/May 2005 and a Preferred Options consultation in July-August 2005. A full statement of the Council's pre-submission consultation on the Core Strategy is available dated February 2006 from the Council. Consultation at these two stages took a variety of

forms including public reports and associated questionnaires, public meetings; public exhibitions; features in the Council newspaper 'Hambleton News'; and face-to-face meetings with over twenty organisations such as young people, disabled groups, the gypsy and traveller community and Age Concern. In addition to documents being published in paper form, they were available as CDs and were published also on the Council's website.

7.1 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 was proposing to deal with the issues.

7.2 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 Core Strategy Preferred Options Consultation. There were only five comments received on the Sustainability Appraisal from the Key Environmental bodies; of the five, three were wholly supportive of the Sustainability Appraisal process and findings, requiring no further action. However, the Environment Agency did raise the issue of flooding and suggested that the Core Strategy had not been sufficiently mindful of the Sustainability Appraisal recommendation regarding the implications of climate change. In response, climate change and, in particular, flood risk now form one of the twelve strategic objectives of the Core Strategy. Other consultees included North Yorkshire County Council who raised an issue to do with appraising the 'do nothing' option as required by the then current ODPM guidance ie. assuming the current Local Plan continues and a Core Strategy is not prepared. Although the appraisal of the Preferred Options did consider the evolution of the District without the Core Strategy, it has now done so in a more systematic way by assessing the four guiding principles of the Local Plan against the Sustainability Framework. (See final Sustainability Appraisal Report Appendix 6 - Submission Appraisal Matrices). This and other concerns raised by the County Council have been

addressed through minor changes to the Sustainability Appraisal as set out in Appendix 2 Changes to Sustainability Appraisal Table B of the final Sustainability Appraisal report.