

## 2 Introduction

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### 2.1 Purpose of this Report

This document is the Final Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Report of the Revised Deposit Draft of the Warwick District Local Plan. It has been produced to meet the SA Reporting requirements of the guidance from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) on implementing the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive<sup>1</sup>.

This SA Report sets out the appraisal methodology, the sustainability objectives, baseline information used in the appraisal process, the assessment of the plan policies, proposed and agreed changes to the plan policies and proposals to monitoring the plan implementation.

Consistent with the requirements for consultation on the Revised Deposit Draft Local Plan, this report is being circulated widely for views. It follows on from the publication and consultation on the initial SA Scoping Study in February 2005 and the draft Final SA Report in March 2005.

### 2.2 Requirement for Appraisal of the Warwick Local Plan

The European Directive 2001/42/EC requires a 'Strategic Environmental Assessment' (SEA) of proposed Regional Spatial Strategies, Development Plan Documents, and Supplementary Planning Documents. The objective of the Directive is "to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development" (Article 1). These aims are consistent with a range of UK Government policies on the environment and sustainable development.

The Directive applies to all relevant plans and programmes whose formal preparation began after 21<sup>st</sup> July 2004 and those that will not be adopted by 21<sup>st</sup> June 2006. The Directive has been enacted in the UK through the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (SI 1633).

The Directive defines "environmental assessment" as a procedure comprising:

- preparing an Environmental Report on the likely significant effects of the draft plan or programme;
- carrying out consultation on the draft plan or programme and the accompanying Environmental Report;
- taking into account the Environmental Report and the results of consultation in decision making; and

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<sup>1</sup> Sustainability Appraisal of the Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Framework: Consultation Paper, ODPM, September 2004

- providing information when the plan or programme is adopted and showing how the results of the environmental assessment have been taken into account.

Separately, Section 39 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) also requires that relevant organisations must exercise their functions with the purpose of contributing towards sustainable development. SA provides one means by which this requirement can be implemented by ensuring that the contribution of a policy towards the realisation of a range of sustainable development objectives can be assessed.

## 2.3 Warwick Local Plan objectives and outline of contents

The Local Plan is a land use plan that seeks to control the location and nature of new development within the District. The Plan contains policies, designations and allocations which will be used to determine planning applications and applications for conservation area consent, listed building consent and consent for works to protected trees.

As stated in the Local Plan itself, the overriding objective is to contribute towards the achievement of the joint vision of Warwick District: “We want Warwick District to be safe, healthy, fair and prosperous, now and into the future”.

This is supported by a Core Strategy, with aims and objectives in four main areas taken from the Government’s definition of sustainable development<sup>2</sup>. These are given in **Table 2.3** below<sup>3</sup>. They represent the key aspirations of the District, and it is the purpose of the policies within the Local Plan to contribute towards the realisation of these objectives.

**Table 2.1 Local Plan objectives**

<b>Aim 1:</b>	<b>To Maintain High and Stable Levels of Economic Growth</b>
Objective 1A:	To meet the employment needs of the whole community to 2011
Objective 1B:	To support small businesses
Objective 1C:	To support the diversification of the rural economy.
Objective 1D:	To meet the housing needs of the whole community to 2011
Objective 1E:	To maintain and enhance the viability and vitality of the town centres
Objective 1F:	To promote the regeneration of deprived areas
Objective 1G:	To promote sustainable tourism
<b>Aim 2:</b>	<b>Effective Protection of the Environment</b>

<sup>2</sup> “A better quality of life: a strategy for sustainable development in the UK”, DETR, (Cm 4345, The Stationery Office, London, ISBN 0-10-143452-9)

<sup>3</sup> These aims and objectives are those as at 16<sup>th</sup> February 2005 and were not updated to reflect the Government’s new Sustainable Development Strategy, ‘Securing the Future’ (March 2005) as this appraisal was conducted prior to its release.

Objective 2A:	To minimise the development of green field land
Objective 2B:	To protect and enhance the natural environment
Objective 2C:	To protect and enhance the historic environment
Objective 2D:	To protect the character and setting of towns and villages
Objective 2E:	To promote excellence in design and enhance the built environment

**Aim 3: Prudent Use of Natural Resources**

Objective 3A:	To reduce the need to travel
Objective 3B:	To promote more sustainable travel choices
Objective 3C:	To reduce the consumption of scarce resources

**Aim 4: Social Progress which Recognises the Needs of Everyone**

Objective 4A:	To secure affordable housing
Objective 4B:	To promote social inclusion and reduce anti social behaviour
Objective 4C:	To promote healthy lifestyles
Objective 4D:	To protect the amenity of the local community
Objective 4E:	To protect and enhance community facilities

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In addition to the Core Strategy, the Local Plan includes the policies that guide the location and nature of development. These policies are divided into the following chapters:

- Urban Area Policies;
- Town Centre Policies;
- Rural Area Policies;
- Designated Areas Policies;
- Site Specific Policies;
- Development Policies; and
- Sustaining Communities.

The whole District is divided into urban areas, town centres, and rural areas, with the first three chapters relating to these areas in turn. Some sites within the District are also within designated areas or are the subject of site specific policies and will be required to consider these policies as well. All proposals for development are required to consider the policies within the final two chapters.

## 2.4 Compliance with the SEA Directive/ Regulations

The European Directive 2001/42/EC (EC, 2001) and the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 requires an Environmental Report to be completed.

Schedule 2 of the Regulations defines the content of the Environment Report in the following box 2.1.

**Box 2.1: Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations: Information for Environmental Reports**

1. An outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan or programme, and of its relationship with other relevant plans and programmes.
2. The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme.
3. The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected.
4. 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 Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds(a) and the Habitats Directive.
5. The environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or Member State 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.
6. The likely significant effects on the environment, including short, medium and long-term effects, permanent and temporary effects, positive and negative effects, and secondary, cumulative and synergistic effects, on issues such as—
  - (a) biodiversity;
  - (b) population;
  - (c) human health;
  - (d) fauna;
  - (e) flora;
  - (f) soil;
  - (g) water;
  - (h) air;
  - (i) climatic factors;
  - (j) material assets;
  - (k) cultural heritage, including architectural and archaeological heritage;
  - (l) landscape; and
  - (m) the inter-relationship between the issues referred to in sub-paragraphs (a) to (l).
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with regulation
10. A non-technical summary of the information provided under paragraphs 1 to 9.

Further guidance has been provided by ODPM on the contents of the Environment Report consistent with its extension to include wider sustainability objectives. The guidance has adapted the requirements of the SEA Regulations and renamed the report, a Sustainability Report. The sections that make up the Sustainability Report are presented in table 2.2. The final column identifies how these issues have been captured within this report.

**Table 2.2: Compatibility of Warwick SA Report with ODPM SA Report Requirements**

<b>SA Report Sections</b>	<b>Information to be included</b>	<b>Warwick SA Report</b>
Summary of outcomes	Non technical summary, statement of the difference that the process has made, how to comment on the report	Section 1: Summary of Outcomes
Appraisal Methodology	Appraisal method, summary of who was involved and when the appraisal was completed	Section 3: Appraisal Methodology
Background	Purpose of the SA and SA Report, plan objectives, compliance	Section 2: Introduction
Sustainability Objectives, baseline and context	Links to other plans, programmes and strategies, description of the baseline and trend information, any difficulties encountered, the SA framework and the main sustainability issues	Section 4: Sustainability Objectives, baseline and context
Plan issues and options	Presentation of the main strategic options and their appraisal	Not included
Plan policies	Summary of the significant sustainability effects of the preferred policies, outline of how they were considered, proposed mitigation and associated residual risks	Section 5: Plan policies
Implementation	Links to other plans and programmes and proposals for monitoring	Section 6: Implementation

The circumstances in which Warwick has developed its Local Plan created significant challenges for the Council to anticipate how the Directive would be applied to spatial plans. This was mainly due to the fact that the first draft of the Local Plan was published prior to the implementation of the SEA Directive and also due to the lack of availability of sustainability appraisal guidance for local plans from central government.

It should be noted that Warwick DC did complete a sustainability appraisal of the first draft of the revised Local Plan. This was published in November 2003. The scope, approach and content of the appraisal was consistent with the then statutory requirements included within the Town and Country Planning (Development Plan) (England) Regulations 1999 which required local planning authorities (LPA) to have regard to economic, environmental and social considerations when developing policies.

Following the adoption of the SEA Directive, its implementation into UK legislation and its interpretation by ODPM, Warwick DC has sought to revise and amend its approach to sustainability in a manner that is consistent with the evolving guidance. However, in one clear regard it is deficient, this is in the consideration of early strategic plan options and an appraisal of their contribution to sustainable development objectives. However, as the work to develop such options took place with the issue of the “Key Issues Report” in April 2001, the value of completing a retrospective analysis of such options four years after they were first developed is viewed as limited. The Council has taken a pragmatic approach and sought to focus its attention on those elements of the SEA process that provide the greatest opportunity to improve the contribution of the plan policies towards the realisation of sustainable development. In consequence, its efforts have been focused upon developing and gaining agreement on the most appropriate appraisal methodology and then seeking to apply it to the plan policies. In

completing this work, the Council recognises that it is not compliant with all stages of the SEA Regulations and as such does not claim that it is; however, it has sought to develop an approach that is consistent with the overall objective of the SEA Directive, namely,

*“to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development*