Southend-on-Sea Development Management Development Plan Document

Sustainability Appraisal of the Revised Proposed Submission

NON TECHNCIAL SUMMARY

March 2014

On behalf of **Southend-on-Sea Borough Council**

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BOROUGH COUNCIL

Contents

1   Introduction

1.1   This report is the summary of the sustainability appraisal (SA) of the Revised Proposed Submission version of the Southend-on-Sea Development Management Development Plan Document (DPD). This DPD is part of the Local Development Framework that, together with national policy, sets the planning policy for the borough.

1.2   This summary is intended to provide an overview of the findings of the SA, with more detail of the process and outputs included in the main report.

1.3   The DPD sets the detailed policies to support the strategic policies and vision of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy DPD. The policies will be used to determine planning applications in the borough, setting out the criteria which will be used to determine whether or not development proposals are likely to be acceptable.

1.4   The purpose of the SA is to help promote sustainable development through the integration of social, environmental and economic considerations into the preparation of planning policy documents.

1.5   The SA report includes recommendations of where the policies might be refined or gaps filled to ensure good coverage of sustainability considerations. This is part of a process of SA where successive stages of the emerging DPD are appraised and findings fed into the next stage of plan preparation.

1.6   The full SA report is a public document and its purpose is to show how the sustainability considerations are integrated into preparing the DPD. The SA report is also intended to give readers of the plan an idea of how effective the DPD might be in delivering more sustainable development, and where there might be adverse impacts.

1.7   So far there have been two versions of the SA report prepared. The initial SA report was prepared in June 2010 on an early version of the DPD, which set out a set of option for policies that would be part of the DPD. The SA at that time reviewed the preferred policy options and the relative sustainability implication of pursing the alternatives. The SA report was available for consultation alongside the Issues and Options version and helped inform the plan makers as part of the submission version preparation.

1.8   Following this the plan makers prepared a full 'submission' version of the DPD, which was also subject to SA and reported on in March 2011. However, after the DPD was finished there was a change in national planning policy, with government publishing the National Planning Policy Framework in March 2012. As a result the plan makers needed to revise the DPD to bring it into line with national policy. This meant the SA also had to be repeated and it is this appraisal that is reported here.

1.9   Sustainability appraisal consists of two main stages, these are:

■   Defining sustainable development in the context of development in Southend-on-Sea, through investigation of background material on sustainability and identifying the sustainability issues and context for the borough; and

■   Using the definition of sustainable development to help assess if the policies would help contribute or detract from achieving it and identifying ways the performance could be improved.

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2   Defining sustainable development

2.1   Defining sustainable development for the sustainability appraisal (SA) of the Development Management Development Plan Document (DPD) began with the scoping report prepared for the SA of the Core Strategy. The SA scoping stage involved gathering information about the borough and the existing sustainability issues that the LDF could address. The full scoping report is available on the Southend-on-Sea website**.**

2.2   This framework is made up of a number of sustainability objectives that reflect the principle elements of sustainable development over which the LDF, as a whole, could have some influence. The framework below is based upon that in the Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal Framework. Changes have been made to bring the framework up-to-date, based on the updated policy context, the baseline data and the issues and options reports for the area covered by the DPD.

2.3   As part of defining sustainable development, objectives of the other plans, programmes and strategies that cover the borough were also looked at. The SA involved a review of national, regional and local plans and strategies. Plans reviewed included:

- National Planning Policy Framework;
- South Essex and Thames Gateway plans;
- Community Strategy;
- Local Transport Plan 3;
- Local economic assessments;
- Southend-on-Sea Core Strategy.

2.4   The output of the process is to set a 'sustainability framework' for use in the SA of the DPD. The framework includes 17 main concerns for the delivery of sustainable development.

- **Accessibility:** enable all to have similar and sufficient levels of access to services, facilities and opportunities;
- **Housing:** to provide the opportunity for people to meet their housing need;
- **Education and skills:** to assist people in gaining the skills to fulfil their potential and increase their contribution to the community;
- **Health, safety and security:** to improve overall levels of health, reduce the disparities between different groups and different areas, and reduce crime and the fear of crime;
- **Community:** to value and nurture a sense of belonging in a cohesive community, whilst respecting diversity;
- **Biodiversity:** to maintain and enhance the diversity and abundance of species, and safeguard these areas of significant nature conservation value;
- **Landscape character:** to maintain and enhance the quality and character and cultural significance of the landscape, including the setting and character of the settlement;
- **Built environment:** to maintain and enhance the quality, safety and distinctiveness of the built environment and the cultural heritage;
- **Air:** to reduce all forms of air pollution in the interests of local air quality and the integrity of the atmosphere;

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- **Water:** to maintain and improve the quantity and quality of ground, sea and river waters, and minimise the risk of flooding;

- **Land:** to use land efficiently, retaining undeveloped land and bringing contaminated land back into use;

- **Soil:** to maintain the resource of productive soil;

- **Minerals and other raw materials:** to maintain the stock of minerals and other raw materials;

- **Energy sources:** to increase the opportunities for energy generation from renewable energy sources, maintain the stock of non renewable energy sources and make the best use of the materials, energy and effort embodied in the product of previous activity;

- **Local economy:** to achieve a clear connection between effort and benefit, by making the most of local strengths, seeking community regeneration, and fostering economic activity;

- **Employment:** to maintain and enhance employment opportunities matched to the size of the local labour force and its various skills, and to reduce the disparities arising from unequal access to jobs;

- **Wealth creation:** to retain and enhance the factors which are conducive to wealth creation, including personal creativity, infrastructure, accessibility and the local strengths and qualities that are attractive to visitors and investors.

3 Findings of the sustainability appraisal

3.1 The Development Management Development Plan Document (DPD) provides an additional level of detail to Core Strategy and national planning policies that should help deliver more sustainable development in Southend.

3.2 The SA finds that in developing the submission version of the DPD from the Issues and Options version format, the plan is much improved. The DPD is only 15 policies long and clearly worded. The succinct document is likely to be user friendly and therefore help planning applications move through the decision making system. The smooth progression of the applications will aid delivery of development, helping to meet the social and economic needs of the borough.

3.3 There is much in the policies of the DPD that should help in delivering sustainable development. This includes addressing climate change through development, securing better quality design, retaining employment land and protecting the borough's natural and built assets.

3.4 Through the iteration of the DPD the SA recommendations of how to improve sustainability in the policies have been taken into account. The result is that there are few outstanding SA recommendations or concerns in the SA of the Revised Proposed Submission Development Management DPD.

3.5 The review of policies as part of the SA identifies the following sustainability implications of the Development Management DPD:

- Policies including **DM1** and **DM15** recognise the importance of helping create places that are attractive for non-car users and encourage walking and cycling and therefore have

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the potential to secure environmental and social sustainability benefits. Making sure car parking does not exceed maximum standards set in policy for non-residential development in the town centre and out-of-centre location will be essential as part of this, as will making sure all places are attractive to those arriving on foot.

- Policies **DM2** and **DM3** should help achieve more efficient use of resources, including water use and energy.

- The residential mix of housing types set out in **Policy DM8** should be regularly updated to reflect current needs and any update in the Strategy Housing Market Assessment, risk of oversupply of any one housing type should be monitored, taking into account the demographic structure of Southend.

- Policies of the plan are also clear on the need to protect the economy of the borough. The town centre focus for employment development (**Policy DM10/DM11**) is supported in securing sustainable development, as this is the most accessible location in the borough and has good potential to support objectives for reducing car use. **Policy DM13** also sets out how retail areas will be protected from change of use that would impact on viability.

- **Policy DM12** provides detail on how viability of visitor accommodation will be tested, this includes consideration marketed viability, checking that the hotel is being run to a potentially viable businesses model or is being realistically marketed for sale. This clarity may help protect visitor accommodation in its current use where it is an important part of the character of the town.

- Several of the policies aim to protect and enhance the built character of the borough. For instance **Policy DM1** reference the standards and guidance that should be applied to the design of new development and **Policy DM5** sets the principles of protection of built heritage. In addition, **Policy DM6** covers the Seafront and the specific measures to manage this as one of the borough's greatest assets. The design of tall and large buildings is covered in **Policy DM4**, with the potential for ensuring these make a positive contribution to the townscape.

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