

Topic Paper13 Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment

Crawley Borough Council adopted its Core Strategy back in November 2007, providing the spatial vision, objectives and development strategy for Crawley up to 2016. The Council has now begun preparing the successor to the Core Strategy – the Core Strategy Review – which will cover a much longer period up to 2026. Although there are aspects of the original Core Strategy that can be retained there are other areas where significant change has occurred in the intervening years and this will need to be reflected in the new document.

This consultation period is the first of the Review and further consultation stages are planned before the document is adopted in early 2012. This is your opportunity to shape the way the town develops over the next 20 years and the Council would appreciate and value any comments you have on this Topic Paper or any of the others that form part of this consultation.

Current Context of Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment

To help ensure that the Crawley Local Development Framework (LDF) is sustainable, a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) has to be undertaken alongside all Local Development Documents (LDDs). An SA is a process that aims to predict and then assess the economic, environmental and social effects likely to arise from the adoption of a LDD.

The Council is also required by European Law to undertake another appraisal known as a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). An SEA is a process for identifying the environmental impacts likely to arise from an LDD. As both the SA and the SEA aim to predict and assess the impacts of plans, they are usually combined to avoid duplication. They are referred together as the SA / SEA.

In tandem with the topic papers prepared as part of the Core Strategy Review (May 2009), an SA / SEA Scoping Report has been prepared. The Scoping Report proposes the methodology that will be applied in future SA / SEAs.

It is the intention that the SA / SEA Scoping Report will be used as the basis for appraising the Core Strategy Review as it is developed, as well as any subsequent supporting LDDs that form part of the Crawley LDF. This SA / SEA Scoping Report will supersede the Scoping Report prepared as part of the preparation of Crawley's adopted Core Strategy (November 2007).



Indication of the Proposed Direction

The SA / SEA itself has been split into topic areas, which cover similar issues to the Core Strategy Review Topic Papers, although some issues have been combined and specific Directives (issues) from the SEA have been incorporated. Baseline data has been collected for each of the topic areas using the most up-to-date information known to the Council. This baseline data has been used to establish the key issues facing the Borough. This in turn has enabled a number of objectives to be identified.

The sustainability objectives listed will be used to appraise options considered as LDF policies are created and progressed. They will also help identify potential mitigation measures that might be appropriate to offset the impact of the policies in social, environmental and economic terms. The Topic Areas and sustainability objectives are as follows:

A Climate Change, Sustainability, Sustainable Design and Construction

Including: energy efficiency, flooding, air quality, noise, water, waste, climate change and water supply.

SEA Directive – Climatic change, Material Assets, Water

Objective One - To minimise the effects of climate change through the promotion of energy efficiency, sustainable design and construction, the re-use of materials, reduction of waste and alternatives to the car

Objective Two - To reduce the risk of flooding, minimise the amount of waste water, protect water resources and ensure water supply is maintained in a sustainable way

B Design and Heritage

Including: urban design, urban environment, cultural heritage.
SEA Directive – Cultural Heritage

Objective Three – To protect and enhance the valued built environment and character within the town through high quality new design and the protection of culturally valuable areas and buildings

C Housing

Including: housing need; aspirations; strategic development locations.

Objective Four - Maximise the use of land to deliver housing that meets the needs and aspirations of the Borough

D Economy

Including: maximising benefits of Gatwick Diamond; vibrant town centres; strong economic growth.

Objective Five - To maintain, support and promote a diverse employment base that is of a scale to serve the local and sub-regional economy

E Natural Environment

Including: countryside, landscape, biodiversity, greenways.
SEA Directive – Biodiversity, Landscape, Air Quality, Fauna, Flora and Soil

Objective Six – To conserve and enhance the biodiversity habitats, key landscape features, fauna and flora within the Borough

F Transport and Infrastructure

Including: roads; rail; public transport; water; sewerage, Gatwick and Infrastructure.

Objective Seven – To reduce car journeys and promote sustainable and alternative

methods of transport, whilst ensuring sufficient transport infrastructure is delivered to meet the requirements of the Borough

Objective Eight – To ensure the provision of sufficient utility infrastructure to meet the requirements of the Borough

G Population, Community Facilities and Open Spaces, Crime and Health of the Community

Including: demographics educational establishments, community halls, open space, sport and recreation provision.
SEA Directive – Population, Human Health

Objective Nine – To promote a strong, healthy, sustainable community with access to services and facilities to meet the needs of the community and the Borough

Current Context of Habitat Regulations Assessment

The Council is also required to undertake a Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA).

The purpose of a Habitat Regulations Assessment is to assess the impacts of a land-use plan(s) against the conservation objectives of sites protected by European law. The assessment must determine whether the plan would adversely affect the integrity of the sites in terms of their nature conservation objectives. Where negative effects are identified, other options should be examined to avoid any potential damaging effects on the designated sites.

To accompany the Core Strategy Review Non Statutory Consultation Document an initial HRA Screening Report has been prepared. The principle aim of this document is to 'screen' the potential for the Core Strategy Review to impact on



Main Issues for Consultation

Although the key topic areas and the proposed objectives are set out in this Topic Paper, it is recommended that anyone interested in the SA / SEA process views the document itself, which is available as part of this consultation. Some questions that you might like to consider when reading the document are set out below:

1. Do you agree with the proposed Topic Areas?
2. Are you aware of other sources of information that the Council should be referring to?
3. Has the Council correctly identified the key issues facing the Borough?
4. Do the sustainability objectives proposed adequately reflect the social, economic and environmental priorities for the Borough?
5. Do the proposed indicators provide a satisfactory monitoring framework?

European Sites, either alone or in combination with other plans.

Although there are no European Sites within the Borough's boundary there are three within 15 km: Ashdown Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA) and the Mole Gap to Reigate Escarpment SAC. Furthermore, at this stage there is uncertainty regarding the source and end destination of the Borough's water and wastewater and therefore, it is possible that the Core Strategy could potentially impact upon European Sites beyond 15 km as well.

Indication of the Key Issues Relating to the Habitat Regulations Assessment

The key issues that will need to be considered as part of the Core Strategy Review and therefore could have an impact on the identified sites:

- At least 7,500 new homes by 2026, in accordance with the Proposed Modifications to the South East Plan;
- Additional employment land, possibly at a sub-regional scale;
- The Town Centre North redevelopment

proposals; and,

- The attempt to establish a University presence in the town.

As such, the main impacts of the Core Strategy Review on the European Sites are:

- Increased traffic – leading to increased air pollution, which could affect species that are sensitive to air quality (e.g. lichens);
- Increased recreational visits – possibly with associated disturbance of fauna and impacts on the habitats (e.g. through trampling); and,
- Impacts relating to the supply and use of water resources on European designated sites, either within or beyond the proposed 15km buffer.

As part of the Core Strategy Review non-statutory consultation a draft Screening Report has been prepared. In consultation with Natural England and Levitt – Therivel sustainability consultants, it has been agreed that there is currently insufficient data to screen out some of the potential impacts of the Core Strategy Review, either on its own or in combination with other plans, on the three European Sites, or sites potentially affected by Crawley's need for water and production of waste water.

Therefore, the Council will now concentrate on the collection of additional data to inform a second Screening Report that will be published towards the end of 2009, as part of the next consultation on the Core Strategy Review. It is intended that this second report will contain sufficient information to adequately assess the impact of the plan on the relevant European Sites and conclude whether the Council will need to prepare a more detailed assessment, known as an Appropriate Assessment.

Next Steps for the Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment

The responses received to this consultation period will be used to influence the SA / SEA that will be developed alongside the Core Strategy Review. This will be used to appraise Policies Options and thereby inform the main document itself.

The Scoping Report will be used for all other LDDs prepared over the next few years, although it may need to be periodically updated to reflect updates in the baseline data.



In relation to the HRA, the Council will seek to collect further information relating to the recreational impacts on the Ashdown Forest SPA / SAC and issues surrounding the supply and use of water resources in time for the next non-statutory consultation period on the Core Strategy Review at the end of the year.