

## **SA OF SOUTH WILTSHIRE CORE STRATEGY PROPOSED SUBMISSION DRAFT**

### **NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

#### **Introduction**

- 0.1 This is the summary of the Sustainability Appraisal Report for the Wiltshire Local Development Framework (LDF) South Wiltshire Core Strategy (Proposed Submission). The area covered by the document corresponds to that formerly covered by Salisbury District Council. This summary describes how the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) process was used to assist in planning for the development and the use of land, as required by planning legislation and Government guidance. The SA assists sustainable development through an ongoing dialogue and assessment during the preparation of LDF Development Planning Documents (DPDs), and considers the implications of social, economic and environmental demands on land use planning.
- 0.2 On 1 April, 2009, Wiltshire Council formally replaced Wiltshire County Council and the District Councils of Kennet, North Wiltshire, Salisbury and West Wiltshire as the new Unitary Authority for Wiltshire. The South Wiltshire Core Strategy DPD covers the former Salisbury District area (excluding the part of Wiltshire that constitutes part of the New Forest National Park) and is well advanced in comparison to the Wiltshire Council Core Strategy. Its completion will enable new housing sites to be identified before the Wiltshire Core Strategy is in place and a rolling five year housing land supply to be maintained. The South Wiltshire Core Strategy will be incorporated into the Wiltshire Core Strategy once the latter is adopted.

#### **The Local Development Framework**

- 0.3 The LDF is the new system introduced by the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and it takes the form of a portfolio of documents including DPDs (Core Strategy, Site Specific Allocations and Area Action Plans), the Statement of Community Involvement, and an Annual Monitoring Report. The Core Strategy sets the LDF's long-term Vision and Strategic Objectives for development planning and it considers the options available through the planning system to the Council and communities in the South Wiltshire area. The Proposed Submission Core Strategy Document sets out the Council's approach to guiding future change and development in the area and identifies strategically important sites to deliver new development. Wiltshire Council will also prepare a county wide Core Strategy which will incorporate the South Wiltshire Core Strategy.

## **Sustainability Appraisal & Strategic Environmental Assessment**

- 0.4 Planning legislation requires that the LDF is subject to SA, a systematic process that is designed to evaluate the predicted social, economic and environmental effects of development planning. European and UK legislation require that the LDF is also subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), a process that considers the effects of development planning on the environment. Government guidance advises that these two processes should be carried out together and outlines a number of stages of SA work that need to be carried out as the LDF is being prepared:

Stage A: Setting Context & Scope  
Stage B: Developing Options & Assessing Effects  
Stage C: Preparing the SA Report  
Stage D: Consulting on the Plan & the SA  
Stage E: Monitoring Implementation of the Plan

- 0.5 The SA/ SEA of the South Wiltshire Core Strategy Proposed Submission Draft has been prepared in accordance with these requirements.

### **The Character of South Wiltshire**

- 0.6 The total area of South Wiltshire - the former Salisbury District - is 388 square miles and the estimated population is 115,800<sup>1</sup>. The focus of South Wiltshire is the historic City of Salisbury which provides many of the services for the surrounding area and is therefore an important commercial centre. Amesbury is the second largest settlement in South Wiltshire and offers a range of services and facilities. A number of smaller settlements provide local services. The majority of South Wiltshire is however, rural, varying in character from the New Forest in the south-east to the extensive, sparsely populated area of Salisbury Plain in the north and the remote rolling countryside of Cranborne Chase to the south west, all linked by lush valleys of the River Avon and its tributaries. There are many attractive villages and these, together with the countryside, historic towns, sites of European nature conservation importance and archaeological remains of international significance (including Stonehenge) form an area of exceptional environmental quality.
- 0.7 The population age profile is comparable to the averages of the South West and the population is generally well educated with lower levels of unemployment than the South West average. However these figures can hide pockets of deprivation. The area has a specific economic niche in the biotechnology, advanced engineering and medical sectors. As in many areas the ratio between income and house prices is making it difficult for young people to buy homes and there is a significant need for affordable housing.

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<sup>1</sup> Office for National Statistics. Neighbourhood Statistics. Salisbury.

0.8 Housing development will be focussed on Salisbury and Amesbury with modest levels of development in the other settlements. Areas for development are limited by physical constraints, including areas at risk of flooding, areas protected for their landscape and ecological value and areas of significant historic/cultural value. A number of these areas are of local, regional, national and international ecological importance, including those protected by the EU Habitats Directive. The Stonehenge World Heritage Site is also within the South Wiltshire area.

### SA Scoping & Issues for Sustainability

0.9 In 2006, the former Salisbury District Council started work on the production of the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report which was finalised in 2007. From this work, the key sustainability issues and opportunities for the LDF and the SA were identified, as set out in the following table:

Key sustainability Issues/ opportunities identified for the South Wilts Area
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ While there is demand for housing of all types, there is a particular need at the lower end of the market, where the gap between wages and house prices make it particularly difficult for first time buyers to purchase their own home.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Issues of water supply and quality.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Accommodating the level of development required by the RSS without adverse effects.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The protection of the District's biodiversity and landscape qualities; particularly the European designated sites and the New Forest National Park which fall within and around the District.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ High levels of car ownership and commuting distances.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The need to protect and enhance the extremely high historic, archaeological and architectural quality of the District.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Opportunity to support and reinforce the biotechnology, advanced engineering and medical sector of the local economy, whilst also providing a diverse range of employment opportunities.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Opportunities to incorporate good practice sustainable design into new development and minimise the carbon footprint of the District.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Opportunities to improve Park and Ride services and address air quality issues in the city centre.</li> </ul>

### SA Framework

0.10 An SA Framework was compiled and included SA Objectives that aim to resolve the issues and problems identified; these are used to test the draft DPDs as they are being prepared. This was included in the SA Scoping Report that was sent to statutory consultees. All contacts on the former 'Local Plan' database were also notified. Comments were invited and received from a number of these organisations, which helped to improve the SA Framework. The following is a list of the SA Objective headings.

SA Objective headings	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Social inclusion for all</li> <li>2. Ensure that everyone has a decent home</li> <li>3. Improve health and well being of the population</li> <li>4. Improve safety and reduce crime</li> <li>5. Improve and protect accessibility to all services and facilities.</li> <li>6. Improve availability and accessibility to open space, including greenspace.</li> <li>7. Increase energy efficiency of buildings, promote energy from renewable sources</li> <li>8. Reduce waste generation and increase levels of reuse and recycling</li> <li>9. Improve air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions</li> <li>10. Promote sustainable transport by improving affordable and accessible solutions particularly in rural areas</li> <li>11. Make efficient use of land, maximise brownfield use</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12. Respond to threats by flooding, promote water efficiency</li> <li>13. Improve road safety and congestion</li> <li>14. Maintain and improve river quality</li> <li>15. Conserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity</li> <li>16. Conserve and enhance the District's landscapes</li> <li>17. Facilitate economic growth and development of new businesses</li> <li>18. Provide suitable infrastructure to promote business growth</li> <li>19. Raise educational attainment and workforce skills</li> <li>20. Harness economic benefits that arise from tourism/cultural activities</li> <li>21. Maintain and enhance the vitality/viability of existing businesses and town centres</li> <li>22. Promote highest standards of development</li> <li>23. Protect and maintain CAs, LBs, SAMs archaeological sites</li> </ol>

### SA of the Core Strategy

0.11 Each stage of the preparation of the Core Strategy was appraised systematically using the SA Objectives. Where significant adverse effects, including environmental effects, have been predicted, the SA sought where possible to identify means of offsetting these effects. Where it was considered that there were opportunities to enhance the sustainability of the proposals, recommendations were made. The appraisal recognised seven categories of predicted effects, as illustrated in the following key.

<b>SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL KEY</b>	
<b>++</b>	Development actively encouraged as it would resolve an existing sustainability problem
<b>+</b>	No Sustainability constraints and development acceptable
<b>0</b>	Neutral
<b>?</b>	Unknown/uncertain effect
<b>-</b>	Potential sustainability issues; mitigation and /or negotiation possible
<b>--</b>	Problematical and improbable because of known sustainability issues ; mitigation or negotiation difficult and /or expensive
<b>x</b>	Absolute sustainability constraints to development

### **Appraisal of the LDF Core Strategy Issues and Options 2007**

- 0.12 Issues and options were developed initially during 2007 and were subject to SA in July 2007. The full range of documents can be found on the Wiltshire Council website (<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/>).

### **Appraisal of the LDF Core Strategy Preferred Options 2008**

- 0.13 The development of Issues and Options, and the subsequent appraisals undertaken, informed the development of Preferred Options, which were subject to detailed SA by Salisbury District Council and published for consultation in February 2008. The full range of documents can be found on the Wiltshire Council website (<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/>).

### **Appraisal of the LDF Core Strategy Proposed Submission Draft 2009**

- 0.14 In Autumn 2008 Enfusion and Nicholas Pearson Associates were commissioned by Salisbury District Council to review and continue with the SA work for the Core Strategy. Working with Council Officers, Enfusion then undertook SA of the strategic growth areas that were included in the Preferred Options document. This was followed by detailed SA of the Core Strategy Proposed Submission policies in May-June 2009, with further revision in July 2009.

### **Uncertainties**

- 0.15 Throughout the development of the Preferred Options and the Sustainability Appraisal process, data gaps and uncertainties were uncovered. It is not always possible to accurately predict sustainability effects when considering plans at such a strategic scale. Impacts on biodiversity and cultural heritage, for example, will depend on more detailed information and studies at a site-level. Whilst climate change science is becoming more accurate, it is difficult to predict impacts likely to result from climate change, including synergistic effects. These uncertainties have been acknowledged, where applicable.

### Significant effects identified

0.16 The majority of the Proposed Submission Draft policies were found to have significant positive sustainability benefits. The following table summarises the key positive effects identified:

Key relevant SA Objectives:	Positive effects identified:
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The plan will have significant positive effects through meeting the housing needs of South Wiltshire, particularly affordable housing needs, and in locations where housing is most needed. The plan also requires dwellings to be built to Lifetime Homes standards.</li> </ul>
Transport Climate Change,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The plan responds to existing high levels of car ownership and accessibility issues by focussing development on the main settlements.</li> </ul>
Economy & Employment,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The plan will have positive effects for the employment sector.</li> </ul>
Social inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A moderate amount of development will be allowed in the smaller settlements and the plan protects services and community facilities.</li> </ul>

0.17 Alongside the many positive effects of the plan, negative sustainability effects were also identified, generally as a result of the increased development proposed in the plan in order to be in conformity with higher level plans<sup>2</sup>. These are outlined below:

Key relevant SA Objective:	Negative Effects identified:
Climate Change Biodiversity Landscape & townscape	<p>The cumulative effects of increased development, including housing, employment development, and other infrastructure. These effects include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ increased air pollution (local and regional);</li> <li>■ pressures on water resources and water quality;</li> <li>■ increased waste production;</li> <li>■ implications for human health (e.g. from increased pollution); and</li> <li>■ incremental effects on landscape and townscapes.</li> </ul> <p>The Core Strategy includes mitigation measures to help minimise these effects. The forthcoming Development Management DPD should also assist in minimising these effects.</p>
Climate Change and Energy/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ An increase in the South Wiltshire's contribution to greenhouse gas production- this is inevitable given the amount of new development proposed, and</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> The Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to the Regional Spatial Strategy suggest a housing requirement of 12,400 homes between 2006-2026, for South Wiltshire.

	includes factors such as increased transportation costs, embodied energy in construction materials and increased energy use from new housing and employment development. Mitigation measures are included within the document to minimise emissions.
Cultural Heritage Landscape & Townscape Building Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Negative effects are identified in relation to the historic environment which should be avoided through appropriate mitigation.</li> </ul>

### Mitigation and enhancement recommendations

- 0.18 An important role of the SA process is to provide recommendations for the mitigation of negative effects and enhancement of the positive effects identified in the appraisal process. These can then be carried forward in the remainder of the plan-making process and can include further recommendations for other Development Plan Documents (for example, Area Action Plans) and for processes including development control and site master planning.
- 0.19 In preparing plan policies, Wiltshire Council has already sought to mitigate some of the negative effects of development and maximise the opportunities presented, and are commended for the work undertaken. The SA process has made further recommendations for the plan, including recommendations to improve the clarity of the document; and recommendations to strengthen the approach to sustainable water management, green infrastructure provision, sustainable transport, and minimising the effect of new development in the countryside.
- 0.20 Many of the mitigations and comments from the SA of the Proposed Submission document and the SA of the Growth Areas relating to the strategic sites have been incorporated in the published edition illustrating that SA has been an iterative and ongoing process in the formulation of the policies.

### Monitoring the Implementation of the LDF

- 0.21 Local planning authorities are required to produce Annual Monitoring Reports including indicators and targets against which the progress of the Local Development Framework can be measured. There is also a requirement to monitor the predictions made in the SA and Government advises Councils to prepare a Monitoring Strategy that incorporates the needs of the LDF and the SA. Wiltshire Council will prepare a monitoring strategy that will incorporate the recommendations from this SA.

## Conclusions and Next Steps

- 0.22 The SA of the Core Strategy Proposed Submission document has appraised the effects of individual policies, as well as the overall effect of the plan, including cumulative and incremental effects. The SA has found that the emerging South Wiltshire Core Strategy will make a significant contribution to sustainability in South Wiltshire, with a particularly strong focus on meeting housing, employment and community needs. The key negative effects identified relate to increased housing and employment development leading to increases in greenhouse gas emissions and the potential cumulative effects of development on the high quality of South Wiltshire's natural and historic environment.
- 0.23 Throughout the preparation of the Core Strategy, the SA has made recommendations for measures to minimise and mitigate any adverse effects. These recommendations have been adopted by those preparing the Core Strategy, thereby resulting in a more sustainable LDF to guide the future of South Wiltshire.
- 0.24 This SA Report will form part of the evidence base during the Examination of the Core Strategy and will accompany the adopted DPD when it is published. If any further significant changes are made to the plan the SA Report will be updated accordingly.