



SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL / STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

of the Wiltshire & Swindon Waste Core Strategy

**SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL REPORT
FOR THE REVISED PREFERRED OPTIONS
CONSULTATION**

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY
April 2007

Enfusion *in association with*
Centre for Sustainability at TRL



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Prepared for: Wiltshire County Council and Swindon Borough Council

<i>date:</i>	April 2007	
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1. SUMMARY AND OUTCOMES

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Introduction

- 1 This document is the summary of the Sustainability Appraisal Report for the Wiltshire and Swindon Core Strategy (Revised Preferred Options Report 2007). It describes how the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) process was used to assist in planning for the development and the use of land for waste management, as required by planning legislation and Government guidance. The SA assists sustainable development through an ongoing dialogue and assessment during the preparation of Development Plan Documents (DPDs), and considers the implications of social, economic and environmental demands on spatial planning.
- 2 Wiltshire County Council and Swindon Borough Council are working jointly on the production of a Minerals and Waste Development Framework for the County and Borough and in 2005 commissioned the Centre for Sustainability at TRL and Enfusion to progress the SA and SEA work.

The Minerals and Waste Development Framework (MWDF)

- 3 The Minerals and Waste Development Framework (MWDF) is part of the new system introduced by the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) and it takes the form of a portfolio of documents including Minerals and Waste DPDs (Core Strategy, Site Specific Allocations and where required, Area Action Plans), the Statement of Community Involvement, and an Annual Monitoring Report. The Core Strategy sets the long-term Vision and Strategic Objectives for spatial planning for waste management and it considers the options available through the planning system to the Councils and communities in the County and Borough. It also sets a strategic policy framework for other Waste and Minerals Local Development Documents, including the Development Control Policies Document and Waste Site Allocations Document.

Sustainability Appraisal & Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 4 Planning legislation requires that DPDs are subject to a 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 DPDs are also subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), a process that considers the effects of development planning on the environment. Where significant adverse effects are predicted, the SEA aims to identify means to avoid or mitigate such effects. Government guidance advises that these two processes should be carried out together and requires DPDs to be subject to a SA incorporating SEA. Wiltshire and Swindon's Minerals and Waste Development Framework Core Strategies have both been prepared in accordance with these requirements for a SA/SEA (The Minerals Core Strategy SA is contained in a separate report).

The Stages of Sustainability Appraisal

- 5 Government guidance requires 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
- 6 For the SA of the MWDF, Stages A-C began in January 2005, and in June-August 2006 a consultation (Stage D) was undertaken on the Preferred Options for the Core Strategy. However, the response from consultees, coupled with the emergence of several 'unsound' Core Strategies produced by other Authorities raised some concerns about the emerging MWDF. The Councils then decided to revise the previous Core Strategy Preferred Options document, which occurred in early 2007 and to re-consult in Spring 2007. This has required the revisiting of SA Stages B-D.

The Character of Wiltshire and Swindon

- 7 Wiltshire and Swindon are located in the east of the region of South West England. The County and Borough covers an area of 3486 square kilometres, and has a population of approximately 630,600. The area is predominantly rural in character, with the majority of settlements being market towns. Swindon is the largest settlement, with a population of 159,000, followed by Salisbury (44,000), Trowbridge (36,000) and Chippenham (33,500).
- 8 Wiltshire has a high quality environment, with over two thirds of the plan area designated for its international, national and local environmental importance. This includes three Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB): the Cranbourne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs, the North Wessex Downs and the Cotswolds. It includes 12 European designated sites of Nature Conservation Importance and over 130 Sites of Special Scientific Interest. There are also approximately 14,000 listed buildings, 10 Historic Parks and Gardens and more than 250 Conservation Areas.
- 9 The County and Borough population is expected to grow by approximately 13.6 per cent over the plan period 2006-2016, with Swindon, Salisbury, Trowbridge and Chippenham being identified in the South West Regional Spatial Strategy as the main areas for growth. The Waste DPDs will need to account for the waste disposal needs of this growing population and consider a current growth in municipal waste at the rate of 4% for Wiltshire, and 3% for Swindon per annum.

SA Scoping & Issues for Sustainability

- 10 During late 2005 a Scoping process was carried out to help ensure that the SA covered the key sustainability issues relevant to land use planning for waste development in Wiltshire and Swindon.
- 11 Relevant plans and programmes were reviewed to develop a wider understanding of the issues and priorities for Wiltshire and Swindon, and information about the current and future social, environmental and economic characteristics of the County and Borough was compiled. From these studies, key sustainability problems and issues were identified, and include landscape protection, air quality, climatic factors and transport, biodiversity, cultural heritage, and waste production.
- 12 A SA Framework was compiled and included a list of 19 SA Objectives that aim to resolve the issues and problems identified. These SA Objectives were used to test the draft DPDs as they were being prepared:

Waste Core Strategy SA Objectives

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote healthy exercise, especially daily exercise 2. Enable access to learning, training, skills and knowledge 3. Promote stronger more vibrant communities 4. Give people in the county access to satisfying work opportunities, paid or unpaid 5. Meet local needs locally 6. Balance the need for growth with the protection of the environment (Wiltshire County Council corporate objective) 7. Reduce vulnerability of the economy to climate change and harness opportunities arising 8. To improve our roads and make them safer (Wiltshire County Council corporate objective) 9. Protect habitats and species 10. Promote the conservation and wise use of land 11. Protect and enhance landscape and townscape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Value and protect diversity and local distinctiveness including rural ways of life 13. Maintain and enhance cultural and historical assets 14. Reduce vulnerability to flooding 15. Reduce non renewable energy consumption and greenhouse emissions 16. Keep water consumption within local carrying capacity limits (taking account of climate change) 17. Reduce the rate of landfill, increase recycling and open waste to energy facilities in Wiltshire (Wiltshire County Council corporate objective) 18. Minimise the use of non-renewable resources and where possible promote the use of renewable resources 19. Minimise land, water, air, light, noise, and genetic pollution
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Consultation and preparing the SA Framework

- 13 This approach and the proposals for testing the development planning process developed into a SA Scoping Report that was sent to a wide range of organisations and also made available on the Councils websites. Comments were invited and received from a number of these organisations, and these were incorporated into the SA Framework. The Framework would then be used to undertake Sustainability Appraisal of all Waste Development Plan Documents in the MWDF (a similar framework has been developed for the Minerals Documents).
- 14 Each stage of the preparation of the Core Strategy was appraised systematically using the SA Objectives. A strategic-level appraisal was undertaken of the Vision and Strategic Objectives. A more detailed appraisal was undertaken of the Options and 2006 Preferred Options. Then a further detailed appraisal was carried out on the 2007 Revised Preferred Options. The SA recognised 4 categories of predicted effects, each represented by a different colour, as illustrated in the key below.

Categories of Sustainability Effects

Green (G)	Option actively encouraged in its current form as it would resolve an existing issue / maximise opportunities.
Blue (B)	Option would have a neutral or an uncertain effect.
Orange (O)	Option would need some changes in order to have a positive effect on issues identified.
Red (R)	The option would exacerbate existing problems and cannot be suitably mitigated. Consider exclusion of option.

- 15 Where it was considered that there were opportunities to enhance the sustainability of the emerging policies, recommendations were made and these were primarily with respect to environmental protection (and particularly biodiversity), minimising impacts on sensitive land uses, ensuring benefits for local communities, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, minimising pollution and reducing the transportation impacts of waste developments.

Appraisal of the Waste Core Strategy Options

- 16 In November 2005, a Core Strategy Issues and Options report, jointly prepared by the Councils was placed on consultation. The Vision, Objectives and Options outlined in this report were appraised by Enfusion, and the results used to further develop the Vision, Objectives and emerging policies in the Waste Core Strategy. The Vision was considered to set an appropriate framework for the further development of the Waste Framework. The draft Objectives were found to be generally consistent with the SA Framework, however a number of suggestions were made to improve their sustainability.
- 17 Issues presented in the paper were presented with a range of alternative Options and a comparison of the sustainability effects of implementing each Option was made, with recommendations made as to the Preferred Option in each instance.

Appraisal of the Waste Core Strategy Preferred Options- Stage 1 (2006)

- 18 The development of Options, and the subsequent SA undertaken, informed the development of Preferred Options, which were then subject to a detailed SA, with suggestions made for the mitigation of negative effects, where appropriate. Where available, evidence from the SA Scoping Stage and from other researched sources was used to justify the prediction of effects. The assessment found that the Preferred Options would make a significant contribution to sustainability, and included recommendations for further iterations of Core Strategy policies. The Preferred Options report and accompanying SA Report were placed on consultation in June 2006.

Appraisal of the Core Strategy Revised Preferred Options- Stage 2 (2007)

- 19 The feedback from the SA and Consultation on the Preferred Options has been incorporated into the revision of the Preferred Options. As a number of significant changes were made to the 2006 Preferred Options (including changes to the Vision and Objectives), further Sustainability Appraisal work has been undertaken. The following presents the key findings of this most recent appraisal on the Revised Preferred Options:
- 20 *The Vision & Objectives*
- Provide a strong and bold commitment to managing waste in Wiltshire and Swindon in a sustainable way. The Vision and Objectives look to a future where less waste is produced and waste products are increasingly managed as a resource. They also recognise the inherent value of the existing natural and historic environment and the importance of community engagement and collaborative working.
- 21 *The Policies:*
- Are likely to have a positive impact through ensuring that new waste facilities are located close to the source of waste. This will have benefits for rural areas and AONBS through allowing only small scale facilities in those areas. The policies should also reduce the distances required for the transport of waste, which will improve resource efficiency and minimise greenhouse emissions.
 - Support a movement of waste up the hierarchy, reducing greenhouse gas emission and supporting opportunities for energy capture from waste by providing additional flexibility to allow the development of sustainable waste disposal facilities, including on non-allocated/windfall sites. However this has the potential to lead to cumulative impacts, in particular traffic and pollution impacts, and it is important that the monitoring strategy considers the potential impact of waste management facilities on unallocated/windfall sites alongside those facilities that are located on allocated sites.
 - Ensure waste management facilities are located where they are most environmentally and socially suitable and that sufficient land is provided to allow for a diversity of waste management facilities to meet the waste needs of the County and Borough in addition to providing for new and innovative alternatives to waste management.

- Will have a significant effect in reducing the waste-related impacts of population growth (including through the requirement for waste reduction and waste audits in the development planning process).
- Promote sustainable waste management through exposing more of the population to the concept of sustainable waste management (including developers, household applicants and residents of new developments).

Mitigation

- 22 Whilst no significant negative effects were identified in the assessment of the Revised Preferred Options, there were a number of areas of uncertainty relating to impacts, in particular, cumulative impacts from an increase in waste management facilities over the plan period (e.g.: air pollution, traffic congestion, increased greenhouse emissions). The policies generally contained sufficient measures to mitigate such impacts (e.g. the requirement for SA to be undertaken for all proposals for new facilities), however it is recommended that the monitoring strategy includes provision for assessing such impacts, where feasible.

Conclusions

- 23 The Core Strategy is likely to have an overall positive impact on Wiltshire and Swindon's environment through providing a robust and well-considered framework for the consideration of waste development in the County and Borough and development of the Site Allocations and Development Control Documents. The Core Strategy encourages the sustainable use of resources, including an encouragement of renewable energy sources; the minimisation and recovery of waste; the conservation and wise use of land and considers climate change impacts. This is particularly important given the predicted increase in waste produced in the County and Borough, both from existing and new development.

Monitoring the Implementation of the MWDF

- 24 The MWDF is designed to be an on-going, iterative process, in which all sections are kept up to date through a rolling process of public involvement, monitoring and, where necessary, adjustment. The monitoring of the significant effects of any plan of this type is seen as essential by the European SEA Directive, and the Councils believe that all stakeholders should have an early opportunity to be part of the process.
- 25 The Councils intend to develop one set of indicators to meet the monitoring requirements for both the MWDF and SA processes. The key sustainability issues identified in the SA Scoping Report, including consultation, and the SA of the Core Strategy (2006 Preferred Options and 2007 Revised Preferred Options) have assisted in developing indicators and targets for monitoring, which will contribute to the overall Monitoring Strategy for the MWDF.

Next Steps

- 26 In carrying out the SA of the Core Strategy, Enfusion has identified a number of recommendations. They will be used to inform the preparation of policies in the Core Strategy Submission Document. Enfusion will then carry out a further SA, to determine whether the last stage of policy refinement has progressed the SA Objectives further and a Revised SA Report will be published alongside the Core Strategy Submission Document.

Further information and How to Comment on the SA Report and the Waste Core Strategy

- 27 If you have any comments on the SA and SEA of the Core Strategy Revised Preferred Options Document we would be grateful to receive them. The SA report, Non-technical Summary and technical appendices will be available along with the Waste Core Strategy Revised Preferred Options Report on the Wiltshire County Council website at www.wiltshire.gov.uk/. Comments can be made online.
- 28 The County Council, at County Hall, Trowbridge, Swindon Borough Unitary Authority, Libraries and District Councils will hold copies of the main report and non-technical summary along with the Waste Core Strategy Revised Preferred Options Report . Hard copies of any of the documents are available on request from the address below.

If you wish to make comments in writing, please direct them to:

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Comments must be received by noon on **Tuesday 19th June 2007**.