

# Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal Adoption Statement

## Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan: Part 1 – Core Strategy

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan: Part 1 - Core Strategy (Core Strategy) was adopted by resolution of the full Council on 12 September 2017. Further details can be found on the Oxfordshire County Council website at: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/minerals-and-waste-core-strategy>. The Core Strategy sets out the vision, objectives, spatial planning strategy and policies for meeting development requirements for the supply of minerals and the management of waste in Oxfordshire over the period to 2031.
- 1.2 The preparation of an environmental report that considers the significant environmental effects of a plan or programme (SEA) is required by European Directive 2001/42/EC (also known as the SEA Directive). The SEA directive is transposed into UK law through *The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004* (The SEA Regulations). In addition, under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), Sustainability appraisal (SA) is required to be undertaken during the preparation of development plan documents. Whilst SEA focuses on the environmental effects of a plan, SA considers a plan's wider economic and social effects in addition to its environmental impacts. However, it is possible to satisfy both requirements through a single appraisal process.
- 1.3 The Core Strategy is accompanied by a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Report (updated February 2017), which incorporates the requirements for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). This assesses the social, economic and environmental effects of implementing the Core Strategy, and identifies and assesses 'reasonable alternatives' with the purpose of indicating alternatives that best promote the identified sustainability objectives and ensures that these objectives are integrated into the plan making process.
- 1.4 The SEA Regulations (Reg 16) require that a statement of adoption of a plan or programme be produced, setting out:
- How environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme;
  - How the environmental report has been taken into account;
  - How opinions expressed in response to –
    - (i) the invitation referred to in regulation 13(2)(d);
    - (ii) action taken by the responsible authority in accordance with regulation 13(4),have been taken into account.
  - How the results of any consultations entered into under regulation 14(4) have been taken into account;
  - The reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and

- The measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan or programme.

1.5 This adoption statement contains the information required by these points, as paraphrased in the following headings.

## **2. How environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme.**

2.1 Environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan through the iterative SEA/SA process. Identifying the sustainability framework and the assessment of alternatives allowed significant positive and negative effects of each alternative to be identified, and the effects of reasonable alternatives to be evaluated and compared with each other. This process assisted in identifying which option was the most appropriate to achieve sustainable development as defined through local circumstances. Environmental considerations of the preferred approach were also evaluated. Then, measures to avoid, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse environmental effects were incorporated. The process began with the preparation of the SEA/SA scoping report to support the preparation of the draft Core Strategy. Subsequently, each stage of the SEA/SA process has informed and influenced the development of the Core Strategy.

2.2 In summary:

1. Production of the SEA/SA scoping report (including relevant updates) identified key issues that the Core Strategy would need to help address.
2. In order to address these issues, the SA framework was produced, which included a number of social, economic, and environmental sustainability objectives. This framework provided a way in which the effects of the plan could be described, analysed and compared.
3. At various stages, options were assessed against the sustainability framework. The content of the chosen alternatives in the Core Strategy were also assessed against the identified SA objectives. Consultation of these assessments was undertaken during the preparation of the Core Strategy.
4. The assessments and consultation feedback provided recommendations for additions and changes to improve the Core Strategy, which were taken into account in the preparation of the Plan.

## **3. How the environmental report has been taken into account.**

3.1 Section 8 of the Sustainability Appraisal Report Update (February 2017) outlines how the SEA/SA process and report preparation has been taken into account in the development of the Core Strategy.

3.2 Key stages of the SEA/SA process have been undertaken in conjunction with the preparation of the Core Strategy and presented alongside this during

consultation phases. These stages and how the SEA/SA process has been integrated with the plan process are broadly presented below in the following table:

<b>Core Strategy Stage</b>	<b>SEA/SA Stages</b>
<b>Begin document preparation</b>	Stage A: Setting the context, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope. A1: Identify other relevant policies, plans and programmes, and sustainability objectives. A2: Collecting baseline information. A3: Developing the SA framework. A5: Consulting on the scope of the SA (Scoping Report).
<b>Preparation of Issues and Options (I&amp;O) paper and consultation. Preparation of preferred options, including consultation on possible preferred option.</b>	Stage B: Developing and refining options and assessing of effects. B1: Testing the DPD objectives against the SA framework. B2: Developing the DPD options. B3: Predicting the effects of the DPD. B4: Evaluating the effects of the DPD. B5: Considering ways of mitigating adverse effects preferred and maximising beneficial effects. B6: Proposing measures to monitor the significant effects of implementing the DPDs.
<b>Public Consultation on Preferred options and Development of the Core Strategy</b>	Stage C: Preparing the Sustainability Appraisal Report.  Stage D: Consulting on the preferred options of the DPD and SA Report. D1: Public participation on the preferred options of the DPD and the SA Report. D2 (i) Appraising significant changes. D2 (ii) Appraising significant changes resulting from representations. D3: Making decisions and providing information.
<b>Submission of Core Strategy to Secretary of State</b>	
<b>Adoption of the Core Strategy</b>	Stage E: Monitoring the significant effects of implementing the DPD. E1: Finalising aims and methods for monitoring. E2: Responding to adverse effects. Preparing the SEA statement

**4. How opinions expressed in relation to consultations on the plan/ programme and SEA/SA report have been taken into account.**

- 4.1 The SEA regulations require consultation at various stages of the process. During each stage of consultation, comments were recorded, considered and addressed as outlined in this section.
- 4.2 The first round of consultation was undertaken at the scoping stage in August 2005. The aim of the scoping consultation was to ensure that all the relevant issues were identified and discussed at an early stage of the process so that they could be addressed during the SEA/SA and plan making.
- 4.3 In June 2006, consultation was undertaken on the Minerals and Waste Core Strategy Issues and Options, and the accompanying Interim SEA/SA Report. This was then followed in 2007 by consultation on the Minerals and Waste Core Strategy (Preferred Options), and the accompanying SEA/SA.
- 4.4 A further round of scoping occurred in 2009, with a revised Scoping Report being consulted upon in April 2009. Details of the consultation, along with a summary of the comments received and how they have been addressed are included in Appendix A of the SEA/SA of the Pre Submission Minerals and Waste Core Strategy (March 2012).
- 4.5 During September and October 2011, consultation was carried out on the SA Reports of the Minerals and Waste Preferred Strategies. Details of the consultation, along with a summary of the comments received and how they were addressed are also included in Appendix A of the SEA/SA of the Pre submission Minerals and Waste Core Strategy (March 2012).
- 4.6 In May 2012, consultation was carried out on the SA Report of the Minerals and Waste Proposed Submission Document. The list of those who responded to this consultation, along with a summary of the comments received and how they have been addressed are included in Appendix B1 to the SEA/SA Report Update (February 2017).
- 4.7 A further revised version of the scoping Report was consulted on in December 2013/January 2014. The list of those who responded to the consultation, along with a summary of the comments received and how they have been addressed is included in Appendix B2 of the SEA/SA Report Update (February 2017).
- 4.8 The next round of consultation on the Oxfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan: Core Strategy Consultation Draft and its accompanying SEA/SA Report ran from February to April 2014. Comments from those who responded and how they have been addressed are included in Appendix B3 of the SEA/SA Report Update (February 2017).
- 4.9 A further round of consultation was then undertaken on the Publication Core Strategy from 19<sup>th</sup> August to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015, accompanied by the SEA/SA Report (August 2015). Comments from those who responded to this

consultation and how these have been addressed are included in Appendix B4 of the SEA/SA Report Update (February 2017).

- 4.10 Consultation was undertaken on the SEA/SA Report Addendum (April 2016) which was prepared following submission of the Core Strategy. Comments from those who responded to this consultation and how these have been addressed are included in Appendix B5 of the SEA/SA Update (February 2017).
- 4.11 Finally, the SEA/SA Report was revised in conjunction with the proposed main modifications, and the update (February 2017) was published alongside the proposed modifications in February 2017. Representations on this updated document were considered by the Inspector, who in his final report found the SEA/SA Report Update to adequately address compliance with legal requirements (paragraph 27).
- 4.12 Consultation on the stages of the Core Strategy, and how responses on these were taken into account, are outlined in the Statement on Consultation and Representations, December 2015.
- 4.13 Key statutory stakeholders, including the SEA Consultation Bodies were consulted at each stage of the plan-making process. Other stakeholders including industry and the public were also consulted. At all consultation stages the relevant documents were made available to consultees at council offices free of charge, and put on the council's website.

## **5. How have the results of any consultation entered into under Regulation 14(4) been taken into account?**

- 5.1 Regulation 14(4) relates to where the Secretary of State receives an indication from another EU Member State that it wishes to enter into consultations before the adoption, or submission, of a plan or programme. No such request was received and therefore no additional consultation of this kind was undertaken.

## **6. The reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with.**

### *Minerals Strategy*

- 6.1 Table 5-1 and Appendix C in the SEA/SA Report Update (February 2017), outline the minerals strategy alternatives considered in the preparation of the Core Strategy, and why the current alternatives have been chosen. Appendix C deals with alternatives considered up until submission stage and Table 5-1 deals with alternatives considered after the examination hearings. The policies that consider the quantity and location of activity (M2, M3) have been subject to the most extensive consideration of alternatives as they are the policies that 'drive' the minerals strategy and through which there is the greatest potential for significant effects to result. For some of the supporting policies within the minerals strategy, no reasonable alternatives were identified as the policies either follow national policy and guidance, and hence have no alternatives, or because of the procedural nature of the policy.

6.2 The reasons for selecting the relevant alternatives in the light of other reasonable alternatives for the main mineral strategy policies (M2, M3) are outlined below:

<b>Policy</b>	<b>Reason for selecting alternative in the Plan</b>
Policy M2: Provision for working aggregate minerals.	The Local Aggregate Assessment 2014 is the LAA the Core Strategy is based upon. It sets the current provision levels for the working of aggregate minerals in Oxfordshire. Following the examination hearings, and the Inspector's conclusion that basing the Core Strategy on the LAA 2014 figures was sound, there were not considered to be reasonable alternatives for this policy.
Policy M3: Principal locations for working aggregate minerals.	The final policy has been selected based on the assessment of four alternatives. This alternative is expected to result in the lowest overall lorry movement distance from mineral working sites to markets, and consequently to result in the lowest impacts in terms of air quality, greenhouse gas emissions and transport effects.

6.3 The Council considers that the selected alternatives that have been included in the minerals strategy element of the Core Strategy (incorporating main modifications) are the most appropriate for delivering the objectives. Some alternatives put forward for consideration were not considered to be 'reasonable alternatives' and were therefore not considered in the SEA/SA process. These are detailed in Table 5-1 of the SEA/SA Report Update (February 2017).

*Waste Strategy*

6.4 Table 5-2 and Appendix C in the SEA/SA Report Update (February 2017), outline the waste strategy alternatives considered in the preparation of the Core Strategy and why the current alternatives have been chosen. Appendix C deals with alternatives considered up until submission stage and Table 5-2 deals with alternatives considered after the examination hearings. The policies that consider the quantity and location of waste management activity (W3, W4) have been subject to the most extensive consideration of alternatives as they are the policies that 'drive' the waste strategy and through which there is the greatest potential for significant effects to result. For some of the supporting policies within the waste strategy, no reasonable alternatives were identified as the policies either follow national policy and guidance, and hence have no alternatives, or because of the procedural nature of the policy.

- 6.5 The reasons for selecting the relevant alternatives in the light of other reasonable alternatives for the main waste strategy policies (W3, W4) are outlined below:

Policy	Reason for selecting alternative in the Plan
Policy W3: Provision for waste management capacity and facilities required.	The final policy has been selected as being the more sustainable option, as a positive policy approach (i.e. not including a 'cap') to provision of facilities that would move the management of waste up the waste hierarchy is expected to allow more waste to be diverted from landfill, and thereby reduce the land-take associated with landfill sites. This alternative was also seen as being better able to achieve the Waste Planning Objectives.
Policy W4: Locations for facilities to manage the principal waste streams.	The final policy has been selected based on the assessment of five alternatives. This alternative is expected to maximise the benefits of a wider distribution of waste management facilities across the county by providing larger scale facilities where waste arisings are likely to be greatest and allowing medium scale (non-strategic) facilities at or close to smaller towns. This in turn is expected to lead to positive effects with regards to reduced transport impacts and greenhouse gas emissions.

- 6.6 The Council considers that the selected alternatives that have been included in the waste strategy element of the Core Strategy (incorporating main modifications) are the most appropriate for delivering the objectives. Some alternatives put forward for consideration were not considered to be 'reasonable alternatives' and were therefore not considered in the SEA/SA process. These are detailed in Table 5-1 of the SEA/SA Report Update (February 2017).

#### *Core Policies*

- 6.7 All the policies in their submitted form were considered to be in alignment with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). No options for any of the policies were considered during the development of the Core Strategy as these 'development control' policies cover criteria and details relating to each topic, rather than setting 'levels of activity' or any locations for activity.
- 6.8 As part of the proposed main modifications a new core policy relating to Green Belt has been included. This replaces the requirements that were previously

included in policy W5. As with the other core policies no alternatives were considered during the development of this new policy.

6.9 Main modifications have been included for core policies C4 (water environment), C6 (agricultural land and soils, C7 (biodiversity and geodiversity and C8 (Landscape) but given their procedural nature no alternatives have been considered for those modifications.

**7. The measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan or programme.**

7.1 Monitoring the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the Core Strategy will be undertaken in conjunction with the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR).

7.2 The Core Strategy monitoring framework has been included in Section 7 of the Core Strategy (including main modifications). The proposed SEA/SA monitoring framework is outlined in section 9 of the SEA/SA Report Update (February 2017). Relevant indicators from the SEA/SA monitoring framework will be incorporated into the Annual Monitoring Report. Although these two monitoring frameworks are separate, they are inter-related, and they will be used to identify whether Core Strategy policies are effective, and whether their implementation is causing significant environmental effects. Where targets are consistently not being met for certain policies, or they are causing significant environmental effects, this may indicate that the policy or part of the Plan needs to be reviewed.