

## **St Edmundsbury Borough Council Local Plan**

### **Rural Vision 2031 Local Plan Document**

#### **Strategic Environmental Assessment/Sustainability Appraisal Adoption Statement**

##### **(Statement under Regulation 16 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004)**

St Edmundsbury Borough Council formally adopted the Rural Vision 2031 Local Plan Document on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2014. In accordance with Regulation 16 (3) and (4) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, the Council has produced this statement which sets out the following;

1. How the environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme;
2. How the environmental report has been taken into account;
3. How opinions expressed and results of public consultation have been taken into account;
4. The reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in light of other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and
5. The measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan or programme.

#### **1. How environmental considerations have been integrated into Rural Vision 2031**

- 1.1 One of the key requirements for the preparation of the Rural Vision 2031 Local Plan document was undertaking a Sustainability Appraisal incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA). The purpose of the Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment was to promote sustainable development through the better integration of sustainability (economic, social and environmental) considerations in the preparation of the plan. The incorporation of the SEA into the SA ensures that potential significant environmental effects arising from the plan document are identified, assessed, mitigated and communicated to plan makers. This preparation of the SA/SEA ensured that the requirements of EU Directive 2001/42/EC and the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 have been fully met and incorporated into the Sustainability Appraisal (table A.2 shows the sustainability themes and SEA topics).
- 1.2 The Sustainability Appraisal Report (SA Report), prepared to accompany the Rural Vision 2031 Submission Document, built on the earlier SA/SEA work undertaken by the Council for the SA Scoping Report and the initial SA of the Rural Vision 2031 Preferred Options Document (March 2012).
- 1.3 Following the Examination in Public, the Inspector reported on 14 July 2014 that, with the inclusion of a small number of main modifications to

the policies, the Rural Vision 2031 submission document would be found sound. These changes were relatively minor and do not materially alter the substance of the overall plan and its policies. For this reason it is considered that the original Sustainability Appraisal has not been undermined and is still valid. However, where there have been main modifications to the policies, the original sustainability assessment has been updated as necessary. This update is a note attached to the final SA Report dated September 2014. The key stages in the preparation of the Sustainability Appraisal are summarised in Table 1 below;

**Table 1 – Key SA Tasks and Outputs**

<b>Task / Output</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Draft SA Scoping Report	October 2006	Report considered available data and experience of council officers/LDF and took into account responses to an informal consultation, undertaken between December 2004 and January 2005 with the statutory bodies, relevant Primary Care Trusts, EERA, Suffolk Development Agency, Suffolk Wildlife Trust and other local authority services.
Consultation	October 2006	Natural England, English Nature, English Heritage, Suffolk Primary Care Trust, EERA, East of England Development Agency, Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Suffolk County Council and GO–East were consulted on the draft SA Scoping Report.
Updated SA Scoping Report	April 2007	Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report completed.
Rural Vision 2031 Preferred Options Sustainability Appraisal	March 2012	The document included the assessment of the draft policies.
Consultation	March-April 2012	A wide ranging public consultation. Three comments were received in relation to the Sustainability Appraisal.
Rural Vision 2031 Submission draft Sustainability Appraisal	June 2013	The document reviewed and updated information in the Preferred Options SA and assessed the final set of policies.
Consultation	June-August 2013	A wide ranging public consultation. Four comments were received in relation to the Sustainability Appraisal.

<b>Task / Output</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Sustainability Appraisal of Main Modifications	April 2014	The document included the assessment of the main modifications, where necessary.
Examination in Public and Inspector's Report	Report received 14 July 2014	The Rural Vision 2031 document underwent Examination in Public. The Inspector found the document to be Sound, subject to those main modifications.
Final Sustainability Appraisal Report	September 2014	Following modifications to the Rural Vision 2031, arising from the Inspector's comments, the SA Report has been updated to reflect the final policies.

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

2.1 The preparation of the Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment has been an iterative process parallel to the various stages of the Rural Vision 2031 document and local plan process. At each stage the emerging Vision was subject to a thorough assessment against the Sustainability Objectives, which were identified through the Sustainability Environmental Assessment framework prepared by the Suffolk Sustainability Appraisal Group for all Suffolk authorities, but were locally adapted to reflect the specific characteristics of St Edmundsbury. The final SA report demonstrates how sustainability objectives have been taken into account and integrated into the final Rural Vision 2031 document (Section 4 of final SA). The stages followed in the preparation of the Sustainability Appraisal are set out in table 1 above and are supplemented by the additional information set out below:

### **Stage 1 – Scoping**

- Identifying other plans, programmes and sustainability objectives which inform and influence the development of the Rural Vision;
- Establishing an understanding of the social, environmental and economic conditions of St Edmundsbury (the baseline);
- Identifying key sustainability issues in the borough;
- Outlining SA objectives against which to later evaluate the Rural Vision 2031 policies;
- Gathering consultation feedback on the SA's proposed breadth of coverage and level of detail.

### **Stage 2 – Preferred Options**

- An assessment was carried out on a series of draft policies and reported in the initial SA of the Rural 2031 preferred options document (March 2012).

### **Stage 3 - Submission Stage**

- Taking into account the revised policy wording resulting from the recommendations of the Preferred Options SA/SEA and consultation, a further iteration of assessment of policies contained in the Rural

Submission document was undertaken and reported (see Section 5 of the final SA report).

#### **Stage 4**

- Following the Inspector's comments (received July 2014) and changes to policy wording a further assessment was undertaken (see September 2014 note attached to the final SA report)

2.2 At each stage the sustainability appraisals were reviewed and measures taken forward to refine and improve the sustainability of the plan. This is all recorded in the final SA report.

### **3. How opinions expressed and results of public consultation have been taken into account**

#### **Scoping Report**

- 3.1 To meet the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive, local planning authorities must seek the views of the three statutory environmental consultation bodies on the scope and level of detail of the environmental information to be included SA report: English Heritage, Natural England and the Environment Agency.
- 3.2 As a result of the Directive, Suffolk Sustainability Appraisal Group (SSAG) undertook informal consultation on its SA objectives, indicators and baseline data early on in December 2004 and January 2005. Consultation was also undertaken with the statutory bodies as well as Primary Care Trusts, East of England Regional Assembly, Suffolk Development Agency, Suffolk Wildlife Trust and other local authority services. Comments received were used to assist shaping the generic SA framework for Suffolk.
- 3.3 Consultation was also undertaken on the St Edmundsbury Local Development Framework draft scoping document with the three statutory bodies, other St Edmundsbury Borough Council services as well as other statutory consultees.

#### **Preferred Options Consultation (March 2012)**

- 3.4 Consultation on the Vision 2031 Preferred Options document (March 2012) resulted in three comments being received in relation to the Sustainability Appraisal. These comments are attached at Appendix K to the SA and the changes made to the SA as a result of the 2012 SA recommendations are attached at Appendix J.

#### **Submission Consultation**

- 3.5 The final Sustainability Appraisal was published alongside the Submission Rural Vision 2031 for consultation. Comments on the final SA were received from two organisations. These were sent to the independent

Planning Inspector for his consideration during the examination of the Rural Vision 2031 document.

- 3.6 The September 2014 note to the final SA sets out the final iteration of the policies and the modifications required, following the submission consultation and the examination by an independent planning inspector earlier in 2014.

#### **4. The reasons for choosing the Rural Vision 2031 document as adopted, in light of other reasonable alternatives dealt with**

- 4.1 At each stage the SA involved testing the options presented in Rural Vision 2031 against the sustainability objectives. The results of the SA help to inform how the policies should be taken forward to the next stages of the document. An outline of how the assessment was undertaken at each stage of the development of Rural Vision 2031 is set out in section 2 of the final SA report.
- 4.2 The Rural Vision 2031 Preferred Options document (2012) presented a range of policies to guide growth in and around Rural. The SA of these policies is summarised in section 5 of the final SA. All of the sites were found to have some sustainable and some unsustainable factors.
- 4.3 Appendix G of the SA sets out the discounted list of sites and justification. This assisted with the assessment of alternative sites for development. Appendix J of the SA sets out the changes made to the draft policies as a result of the 2012 SA recommendations on the Preferred Options draft policies.
- 4.4 It is considered that Rural Vision 2031, as adopted, presents the most sustainable approach to the future planning of the town. The Inspector's report, following the examination into the Submission Rural Vision 2031 document states in the table beneath paragraph 234 that the 'SA has been carried out and is adequate.'

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

- 5.1 The process of Sustainability Appraisal has identified a range of sustainability effects and indicators which will require monitoring as part of the implementation of the document.
- 5.2 Appendix 4 of the final Rural Vision 2031 sets out monitoring targets and indicators through which the document will be monitored. This monitoring will be undertaken through the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) which is the monitoring framework to be produced by the Council each year.
- 5.3 The monitoring programme, set out in Appendix 4 of the Rural Vision 2031 document, was based on the proposed monitoring programme set out in Appendix F of the Rural Vision 2031 Sustainability Appraisal.

- 5.4 The monitoring framework has been designed to assist the Council in assessing the performance of the local plan policies and evaluating progress in plan delivery. It is based upon clearly defined and measurable indicators. This approach will ensure that where monitoring indicates any significant threat to the environment or where development may prejudice the achievement of sustainability objectives, the Council is able to take informed and appropriate action.

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