



Rother District Council

Local Development Framework

Core Strategy

Proposed Submission
Core Strategy –

Sustainability Appraisal

Non-Technical Summary



August 2011

www.rother.gov.uk/corestrategy

Issues &
Options



Strategy
Directions



Pre - Submission



Examination



Adoption



Sustainability Appraisal Non Technical Summary

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is to help planning authorities contribute to achieving sustainable development in preparing their plans. Sustainable Development aims to integrate the need to stimulate economic growth, to deliver the needs of all sectors of society, and to conserve and enhance the local environment.
- 1.2 SEA involves examining certain plans and programmes primarily for significant environmental effects. SA widens the approach to include social and economic as well as environmental issues. Local Planning Authority (LPA) plans must undergo both the process of SA and SEA as a result of legislative changes enacted in the UK in summer 2004.
- 1.3 The combined process reviews plans against a set of criteria reflecting local problems and the LPA's objectives in delivering Sustainable Development and addressing these problems.
- 1.4 This report is the combined output of the SA and SEA processes and hereafter is called the SA. The stages of the SA preceding this report culminated in the production of a SA Scoping Report (available upon request from the Council), which documents the results of the gathering of evidence concerning the current social, economic and environmental conditions in the District.
- 1.5 The Scoping Report identified key sustainability problems or likely future problems by looking at statistical trends and comparing the performance of the District with East Sussex as a whole, the South East and England.

The Local Development Framework and the Core Strategy

- 1.6 Rother District Council is currently preparing its Local Development Framework (LDF), a set of planning policy documents, which will replace the existing Local Plan. This document concerns the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) – which sets the overall spatial vision, objectives and policies for Rother District.
- 1.7 The long term spatial vision for the District, extracted from the Core Strategy *Proposed Submission Version*, is shown in the yellow box overleaf.
- 1.8 The Core Strategy is a key planning document under the new planning regime. It is also a key component in the delivery of the

Community Strategy (a strategy all local authorities are required to produce in partnership with representatives from local bodies and interest groups, with the aim of improving the future economic, social and environmental well being of the area).

- 1.9 The Council has prepared its Proposed Submission Core Strategy on the basis of the consultation on the Consultation on Strategy Directions between November 2008 and January 2009.
- 1.10 The Core Strategy is also progressed with full regard to the Council's Corporate Plan which sets out the Council's contribution to achieving the Community Strategy.
- 1.11 It is concerned with 'place-shaping' and will establish the way in which the social, economic and environmental needs of the area can be delivered in the most sustainable way.
- 1.12 It provides broad guidance on the scale and distribution of development and the provision of supporting infrastructure. It also contains 'higher level' policies for delivering the spatial vision. It aims to ensure that investment decisions are not made in isolation, but are properly co-ordinated, with a focus on promoting the principles of sustainable development.

Vision for Rother in 2028

The Rother district is recognised for its high quality of life where there is a strong emphasis on community life. This has been achieved by continuing to support and further develop vibrant, safe, balanced and inclusive communities.

There is a strong commitment to a more sustainable future and a responsible, positive approach to helping address climate change issues. This is reflected in the sensitive stewardship of environmental resources and conservation of the area's highly valued outstanding environmental and cultural assets.

Sustainable economic growth has been secured, with much improved job opportunities, which encourage young people to stay in the area and provides greater prosperity for all.

Improved economic and social well-being has been facilitated by better access to jobs and services, in both urban and rural areas, and improved connectivity with the rest of the region, including through effective telecommunications networks.

Development and change has contributed significantly to meeting local needs and aspirations, having responded positively to the district's circumstances, as well as to regional and sub-regional imperatives.

There has been a notable improvement in economic conditions in the coastal towns of Bexhill and Rye, as a result of a strong focus on regeneration in the 'Sussex Coast' sub-region, notably through close working with neighbouring Hastings.

Bexhill has retained and strengthened its distinct identity and become one of the most attractive places to live on the south coast - attractive to families, the young and older people alike. It is the main focus of development in the district, and this is enabling improvements in the supply of jobs and local facilities, shops and services.

Rye has improved its economic and social circumstances whilst fully respecting and sensitively managing its historic character, vulnerability to flooding and ecologically important setting. It maintains a strong tourism sector and Port activities.

The inland and essentially rural areas of Rother, falling mainly within the High Weald AONB, retain their essential character.

Battle continues to be a thriving small market town and tourist centre which retains its character, with sensitive conservation of its historic core and setting.

The character and diversity of villages has been retained. They are vibrant and inclusive, having evolved organically in a manner sensitive to their surroundings.

The countryside continues to be protected for its intrinsic value, and is well-managed, as well as being accessible and economically active, while change is carefully managed to respect its character.

The SA Process

- 1.13 The outcome of the preliminary 'Scoping' stage of the SA process was a set of Sustainability Objectives created to address the sustainability problems. These objectives can then be used collectively as a means to assess the Core Strategy Plan Objectives, Options and Strategies.
- 1.14 The statutory environmental agencies (Natural England, the Environment Agency and English Heritage) were consulted on the SA Scoping Report in August 2006 and again between December 2007 and February 2008 because the scope was updated.
- 1.15 To comply with the SA/SEA process, the Council's Strategic Options and Spatial and Thematic Strategies for the Core Strategy, which set out the key elements of the planning framework for Rother, have been reviewed against the Sustainability Objectives bearing in mind the following:
- Relevant government planning policy guidance on Local Spatial Planning PPS12
 - The extent to which the option supports other planning policy, for example, the Community Strategy, the Local Transport Plan and the key regional document, the South East Plan
 - Evidence from the environmental baseline about local conditions and problems
 - Representations received on the Consultation on Strategy Directions between November 2008 and January 2009.
 - Guidance and best practice documents including the ODPM SA and SEA Guidance Documents
 - Other relevant guidance issued by bodies such as the Environment Agency, Natural England, English Heritage and the RSPB on matters such as biodiversity, land use and climate change
- 1.16 Options were developed for policy areas, as set out in the Council's Initial Core Strategy Sustainability Report in November 2008 (Appendix 3). Within this SA Report for the Proposed Submission Core Strategy, Appendix 4 lists further 'Plan Options' that have been given subsequent consideration, whilst Appendix 5 contains the 'Sustainability Appraisal of Options'. In addition, all policies are now subject to SA and tested for sustainability at this 'proposed submission' stage.

1.2 Outcomes of the Sustainability Process

1.2.1 The SA objectives were also considered with regard to the Core Strategy Objectives and this helped to inform the development of the Policies for each subject area.

Summary of the Likely Significant Effects of the Strategies

1.2.2 Table 1.2 below summarises the assessment of the potentially significant effects of the Plan Policies on the SA Objectives. The SA Objectives are in bold and italics. (The Plan Policies and the detailed appraisal of them can be found in Appendix 6)

Table1.2: Summary of likely significant effects

	Sustainability Appraisal Objectives
1	<p>Ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent, sustainably constructed and affordable home</p> <p>The significant effects on this SA Objective are beneficial and will potentially be from the Distribution of Development, Bexhill, Battle, Rural Areas, Local Housing Needs and Towards a Low Carbon Future policies.</p>
2	<p>Improve the health and well-being of the population and reduce inequalities in health</p> <p>Potential for the most significant beneficial effects on this Objective will be from the Distribution of Development, Bexhill and various policies in the Communities section (particularly CO2). The reason for the benefits from development is largely connected to the links between good quality, affordable housing and health and well-being</p>
3	<p>Reduce crime and the fear of crime</p> <p>This SA Objective is mainly affected by the Communities Strategy, which promotes working with partner authorities to address issues of crime and disorder and should help lead to significant beneficial effects for reducing crime and the fear of crime. However it is also positively influence by policies concerned with design quality and the public realm (EN3 and EN4) as well as policies which address deprivation and social exclusion, a contributory factor related to crime.</p>
4	<p>Reduce deprivation and social exclusion</p> <p>Significant beneficial effects on reducing deprivation and social exclusion should be experienced as a result of the implementation of policies for Economy and all the spatial policies. Particularly Bexhill, with its focus on providing additional employment opportunities, further education facilities, housing for younger people and support for older people and the focus of Rye on improving local social and economic conditions, should significantly contribute to this SA Objective. Most policies that result in new housing contribute to this SA objective which is reflective of the scale of housing need and its consequent links to wider social problems.</p>

5	<p>Raise educational achievement levels and develop the opportunities for lifelong learning</p> <p>The policies with potential for significant beneficial effects for raising educational attainment are Economy, Young People, and Community facilities. Bexhill also has a strong focus on improving educational opportunities.</p>
6	<p>Sustain economic growth and competitiveness and encourage innovation in higher value, lower impact activities</p> <p>Collectively, most policies within the Core Strategy have a strong economic focus, as directed by the South East Plan in order to raise the economic profile of the region and particularly policies in the Economy chapter.</p>
7	<p>Improve accessibility to services and facilities for all ages across the District</p> <p>Potential for the most significant beneficial effects on improving accessibility within the District is from the Overall Spatial Strategy, Transport and Communities policies.</p>
8	<p>Encourage and facilitate increased engagement in cultural and leisure activities</p> <p>Policies within the Communities section have been judged to give rise to significant beneficial effects for increased engagement in cultural and leisure activities. A number of the spatial policies have been assessed as having more minor beneficial effects which cumulatively could have more significant effects.</p>
9	<p>Improve efficiency in land use and encourage the prudent use of natural resources</p> <p>Policies concerned with sustainable resource management are clearly highly beneficial in this regard. The Environment policies also have clear benefits. The overall spatial strategy has clear direction for making the most effective and efficient use of land, and the continued use of development boundaries will be particularly useful.</p>
10	<p>Reduce road congestion and pollution levels and ensure air quality continues to improve by increasing travel choice and reducing car usage</p> <p>The policy for Integrated Transport has been judged to have beneficial effect for this SA Objective. The encouragement of new enterprise and business into the District through the Economy Strategy and its facilitation of growth of 'home grown' businesses are likely to put more pressure on the road transport system and increase traffic movements within the District.</p>
11	<p>Reduce emissions of Greenhouse gases</p> <p>An increase in the number of households and businesses in the District has the potential for a significant adverse effect on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Other areas of policy (cross-cutting) will help to ensure sustainable construction which should help to limit the generation of new greenhouse gas</p>

	emissions.
12	Minimise the risk of flooding and resulting detriment to people and property There are uncertainties for the effects on this SA Objective linked to the policies for Rye. The policies for the Environment should produce significant beneficial effects for this SA Objective.
13	Maintain, improve and manage water resources in a sustainable way The sustainable management of water is fundamental in achieving sustainable development and the Strategy for the Environment aims to minimise water use, to provide water supply in a sustainable way and to ensure efficient sustainable wastewater infrastructure. The Water Management policy should help to mitigate the adverse impacts on this SA Objective from other strategies.
14	Conserve and enhance biodiversity by protecting both designated and non-designated but locally important species and habitats The related policy in the Environment section seeks to reduce negative effects on biodiversity by protecting priority habitats, identifying a greenspace network and proposing mitigation for significant losses.
15	Protect and enhance the high quality natural and built Environment including landscape and townscape character and particularly the protection of the High Weald AONB. The effects of the Plan Strategies on this SA Objective are generally beneficial. The Environment section leads with the management of the high quality built and natural landscape character and seeks to place high quality design centrally in the planning process.
16	Reduce waste generation and disposal, and achieve the sustainable management of waste Even with high levels of sustainable construction and an effective development distribution the level of development proposed will result in increased numbers of households and businesses and consequently increased waste generation.

1.2.5 Where appropriate, measures designed to offset negative effects of the Strategies (mitigation measures) are proposed and can be viewed in Chapter 7.

1.3 Statement on the difference the process has made

1.3.1 The SA process has investigated the likely significant environmental and sustainability impacts of the options and strategies presented in the Core Strategy. A range of impacts has been identified. The assessment has therefore provided a check on sustainability as envisaged by government guidance. The SA process has

highlighted where options may be ambiguous or in themselves insufficient and this has led to clarification and careful rewording to improve them from a sustainability perspective.

- 1.3.2 The SA process has been influential in informing the development of the Core Strategy. The iterative nature of the process of developing the Core Strategy has allowed the SA to input at various stages and highlight how the Plan can be made more sustainable.
- 1.3.3 The ultimate effectiveness of the DPD from the perspective of sustainable development will depend on an effective partnership between Rother District Council, prospective developers, infrastructure providers and the community at large.

1.4 How to Comment on the report

- 1.4.1 There is the opportunity to comment on this SA as part of the consultation on the Proposed Submission Core Strategy.
- 1.4.2 If possible please complete this online, as this will help the Council efficiently administer the consultation. Please visit the website for step-by-step instructions.
- 1.4.3 For further enquiries please contact Senior Planning Officer Roger Comerford on 01424 787639 or email roger.comerford@rother.gov.uk.