

Post Adoption Environmental Statement

Ribble Valley Borough Council Housing and Economic Development DPD

Introduction

The Ribble Valley Housing and Economic Development Development Plan Document (HED DPD) was adopted at a meeting of the Full Council on 15th October 2019. This Post Adoption Environmental Statement has been prepared in accordance with the following requirements:

- Regulation 16 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans & Programmes Regulations 2004
- Regulation 26 of the Town & Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

It explains how environmental considerations have been incorporated into the HED DPD, including how the Sustainability Appraisal /SEA has been taken into account; how the results of consultation have been taken into account; the reasons for choosing the adopted HED DPD in the light of other reasonable alternatives considered; and how the significant sustainability effects of implementing the HED DPD will be monitored. Full details of the SA process are set out in the Sustainability Appraisal report which accompanies the HED DPD. (It is noted that consultations under regulation 14(4) of the Environmental Regulations in relation to Transboundary Consultations are not relevant to the HED DPD).

Background

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004)(Section 19[5]) requires that local authorities must carry out a Sustainability Appraisal of development plans. The purpose of Sustainability Appraisal is to systematically appraise the social, environmental and economic effects of the strategies and policies in a local development document from the outset of the preparation process. This will ensure that decisions are made that accord with sustainable development principles.

Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) are required by European Directive EC/2001/42 (SEA Directive), The SEA Directive requires local planning authorities to carry out formal strategic environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes which may have significant environmental effects. The SEA process ensures that opportunities for public involvement are provided and the significant environmental effects arising from policies, plans and programmes are predicted, evaluated, mitigated and monitored.

The SEA Directive was transposed into UK law by the Environmental Assessment Regulations for Plans and Programmes (July 2004). Those regulations and Government guidance have merged the SEA and SA processes to allow for a single joint Sustainability Appraisal (SA) to be carried out. This is reflected in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (March 2012) paragraph 165, This DPD was examined under the 2012 NPPF under transitional arrangements established for the introduction of the 2018 revised NPPF.

“A sustainability appraisal which meets the requirements of the European Directive on strategic environmental assessment should be an integral part of the plan preparation process, and should consider all the likely significant effects on the environment, economic and social factors.”

Throughout the remainder of this statement, reference to SA encompasses the requirements of a merged SA / SEA.

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) must be undertaken where there are anticipated significant environmental effects. As the Core Strategy covers a variety of issues

over a large spatial area an SEA was required. The SA was combined with the SEA and a document produced which satisfied the requirements of both.

How have environmental considerations been integrated into the HED DPD and how have the results of consultation been taken into account?

Ribble Valley Borough Council is required by law to produce a Development Plan for the borough. This comprises a strategic and Development Management Policies DPD called the Core Strategy, which was adopted in December 2014 and an accompanying land allocations dpd – the HED DPD. Together they will comprise the Ribble Valley Local Plan 2008 to 2028.

The Core Strategy sets out the strategic planning considerations for the borough and includes strategic policies such as targets for housing and employment etc. It does not allocate land for development, apart from at one strategic site (the Standen site) south of Clitheroe. Instead it sets out broad locations for growth.

Following the Core Strategy, a further document, the Housing and Economic Development DPD, has been produced which will sit alongside the Core Strategy and allocates specific sites/ land for development.

Environmental considerations have been taken into account throughout the preparation of the HED DPD via the SA process. The integrated SA of the Core Strategy was a multi-stage process, as set out in the following sections.

Scoping Stage (alongside Issues and Options)

The SA Scoping Report for Core Strategy was initially published in May 2016. A scoping stage is required to propose and agree the appraisal methodology and collate the information needed to carry this out. The appraisal needed to be set within the context of existing plans and policies and an understanding of the current baseline situation was essential to predict effects and identify key sustainability issues and problems. The scoping report consisted of an examination of other relevant plans and programmes so that relevant sustainability objectives could be brought into the sustainability appraisal framework. This ensured that the appraisal took those objectives into account when assessing the sustainability of policies and proposals in the HED DPD. The SA Scoping Report listed the plans or programmes that were identified as being relevant to Ribble Valley. This included relevant international, European, national, county and local plans and strategies.

Representations were made by all of the consultation bodies (English Heritage, Natural England and the Environment Agency), which stated that they had no comments to make on the SA at this stage.

Issues and Options stage (Regulation 18)

Consultation on the Regulation 18 HED DPD was held from 26/8/2016 to 7/10/2016 and generated a high level of interest. A Summary of responses was produced and made public.

The Issues and Options stage set out the background information and matters that the HED DPD needed to address. It included options for land allocations to meet outstanding housing and employment requirements flowing from the Core Strategy in the light of planning permissions that had already been granted. It was accompanied by a limited Call for Sites addressed specifically and only at those locations still requiring allocations to meet outstanding Core Strategy needs.

The consultation was also accompanied by a set of Draft Proposals Maps that showed extant and updated local (ie Core Strategy) policies and national land designations and constraints such as AONB, Green Belt, Minerals Safeguarding Areas, Flood Zones and others. These maps were intended to replace the outdated Proposals Maps that accompanied the by then replaced District Wide Local Plan of 1998.

As mentioned above the Regulation 18 consultation also consulted on the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping report. The evaluation of alternatives was a key part of the HED DPD process and the SA is a key tool in undertaking this. The options presented at the Issues and Options stage were considered through to the SA that accompanied the Submission Version of the document and beyond into the Proposed Main Modifications stage. The SA identified strengths and weaknesses in relation to each option.

A series of background and evidence papers accompanied the consultation but were not themselves the subject of consultation.

Publication stage (Regulation 19)

The publication version of the HED DPD (Regulation 19) was published for a six week period of consultation from 28/4/2017 to 9/6/2017, along with an SA report and a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA), the latter of which was also to the statutory consultees. The HRA concluded that the Publication Core Strategy was unlikely to have any significant effects on the European sites identified, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects and as such it was not proposed to undertake Appropriate Assessment.

The Publication version set out a series of preferred housing and employment allocations and proposed development management policies on Open Spaces It also involved an updated set of maps adjusted in light of the previous consultation within the document Resultant Changes to the Draft Proposals Map and an updated Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

A Summary of responses to this consultation was presented to Council members on 22/6/2017.

Submission stage (Regulation 22)

The HED DPD was formally submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination on 28/7/2017.

Comments from the previous regulation 19 consultation led to changes to the wording of housing, traveller sites and open space policies, adjustments to some allocation site boundaries, small amendments to some settlement boundaries and the withdrawal of some and addition of other open space sites. Details of these changes were set out in a document called Identified Changes to the Regulation 19 Publication Draft and also in Final Changes to the Draft Proposals Maps.

The Submission version was also accompanied by a full Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA).

The Council held a consultation from 31/7/2017 to 11/9/2017 on all the above documents.

The final SA report and accompanying Appendix addendum incorporated comments made during the Publication stage consultation process. As part of this, within the SA addendum, the proposed changes to the Publication Core Strategy were presented and each change was identified as to whether the change was significant and whether it affected the assessment presented in the SA report. The findings of the addendum were that the majority of the proposed changes to the Publication Core Strategy were minor and therefore would not result in any alternations to the findings of the previous SA assessment.

A Summary of the Council's responses to this consultation's representations was also produced.

Post-submission stage – Proposed Main Modifications.

Following submission of the HED DPD on going housing land analysis revealed that the Council needed to make additional housing allocations over and above those identified in the Submission version already submitted.

A series of additional housing sites, drawn from those already submitted into the process, were identified through a set of screening criteria and were discussed by Council members prior to a public consultation from 22/7/2018 to 7/9/2018. The sites were subject to a Sustainability Assessment, which assessed how the conclusions of the existing submission SA would change following the proposed Main Modifications and was published as a part of the consultation.

All consultation responses were sent to the Inspectorate prior to the Examination in Public

The Inspector concluded that the Plan was sound subject to the Main Modifications being made.

The Examination hearings took place between 27th November 2018 and 24th January 2019.

Public involvement and consultation

A key component of the SA / SEA process is consultation of stakeholders. The consultation throughout the SA process has been in accordance with:

- Article 6 of the European Union Directive 2001/42/EC
- Regulations set out in the Environmental Assessments of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004
- Regulations set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 and earlier versions.

There have been four main stages of consultation at Issues and Options, Publication, Submission and Main Modifications stage as set out above, with SA addenda (as set out above) produced within these stages.

Statements were prepared under the Planning Regulations which set out how previous stages of consultation shaped the Publication version of the Core Strategy (Regulation 17 Statement) and a summary of the issues raised at the Publication Stage (Regulation 22(1)(c)(v) Statement).

Reasons for choosing the HED DPD as adopted in light of other reasonable alternatives

The HED DPD provides the required allocation of housing and employment sites to address the original Core Strategy assessment plus additional needs that subsequently emerged during the plan making process. In addition new development management policies have been formulated and additional clarity provide to pre-existing development management policies to better manage individual development proposals in a way that meets local needs, both economic and social, while protecting the environment.

Following the Examination in Public, the Inspector concluded that with the recommended Main Modifications, the plan satisfies the requirements of Section 20(5) of the 2004 Act and meets the criteria for soundness in the NPPF. These tests included the test that the document must be the most appropriate when considered against the reasonable

alternatives. As explained above, the assessment of alternatives was undertaken at the Issues and Options stage

The Inspector's Report concludes that, "the SA has been carried out in respect of the submitted plan and MMs and is adequate" (para. 51).

Measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan

Monitoring is an ongoing process, integral to the implementation of the HED DPD and a requirement of the SA process. The Council will monitor the effectiveness of the plan in delivering its objectives by assessing its performance against a series of indicators which are set out in Chapter 11 of the adopted Core Strategy. These will be reported on through the Authority's Monitoring Report (AMR).

**Marshall Scott, Chief Executive
Ribble Valley Borough Council
30/10/2019**