

Breckland Local Plan

Sustainability Appraisal Post Adoption Statement

November 2019

Capita Quality Management

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document provides the Sustainability Appraisal Adoption Statement for the Breckland Local Plan 2019 (the Local Plan), which was adopted on 28 November 2019 by the Breckland District Council (“the Council”).
- 1.2 The Local Plan sets out the strategy and policies that will deliver sustainable development in Breckland over the plan period up until the year 2036.
- 1.3 Sustainability Appraisal (SA) was undertaken whilst developing the Local Plan. The purpose of the SA was to ensure that environmental, social and economic issues were considered throughout the development of the Local Plan with the aim of achieving sustainable development through its implementation.
- 1.4 The purpose of this Adoption Statement is to satisfy the legislative requirements of EU Directive 2001/42/EC¹ and the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004².

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/sea-legalcontext.htm>

² <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/1633/contents/made>

2. Legislative background

- 2.1 Section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004³ requires Local Planning Authorities to carry out SA of each of the proposals in a plan during its preparation. Section 39 of the Act requires that at every stage, plans must be prepared “*with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development*”. SAs incorporate the requirements of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (commonly referred to as the “Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations” or “SEA Regulations”). SA covers wider social and economic effects of plans, as well as the more environmentally-focused considerations of SEA.
- 2.2 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) Regulations 2012⁴ states that a SA report must be completed for Local Plan documents in accordance with section 19(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004). In accordance with these regulations, SA, incorporating SEA, was completed for the Breckland Local Plan.
- 2.3 Regulation 16 of the SEA Regulations requires the Council to produce a statement containing the following information as soon as reasonably practical after the adoption of a plan or programme:
- a) *How environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme;*
 - b) *How the environmental report has been taken into account;*
 - c) *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;*

³ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/5/contents>

⁴ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/767/contents/made>

d) How the results of any consultations entered into under Regulation 14(4) have been taken into account;

f) The reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and

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

2.4 The following sections will set out how the Breckland Local Plan has been prepared in accordance with these requirements.

3. How environmental considerations have been integrated into the Local Plan

3.1 A scoping stage is required as part of the SA. This sets out a framework for how the SA would be carried out. Scoping must, as set out in Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations, consider a range of environmental factors including biodiversity, human health and cultural heritage.

3.2 A Scoping Report was prepared in 2013⁵ that set the context for the SA by considering environmental, social and economic baseline information, and relevant plans and programmes. These were refined in the 2014 interim SA Report⁶.

3.3 The 2013 Scoping Report addresses seven topic themes that reflect the SEA Regulations:

- Land, Water and Soil
- Climate Change, Air and Pollution
- Biodiversity, Flora & Fauna
- Cultural Heritage, Landscape and Townscape
- Population and Human Health
- Inclusive Communities
- Economic Activity

3.4 For each topic:

- Relevant international, national, regional and local policies, plans, programmes are identified;
- The aims and objectives of these policies, plans and programmes, and the implications for the Local Plan and SA are set out;

⁵ Breckland Local Plan Scoping Report 2013, Breckland District Council
https://www.breckland.gov.uk/media/13662/Sustainability-Appraisal-Scoping-Report/pdf/Sustainability_Appraisal_Scoping_Report.pdf?m=637014729240270000

⁶ Breckland Local Plan Interim Sustainability Appraisal November 2014, Breckland District Council
https://www.breckland.gov.uk/media/13661/Interim-Sustainability-Appraisal/pdf/Interim_Sustainability_Appraisal.pdf?m=637014726237500000

- The baseline situation and key issues for Breckland are considered; and
- SA objectives are proposed that could be used to assess how well the Local Plan works to respond to objectives and address key issues.

3.5 Within the 2013 Scoping Report, 17 SA objectives were derived that were deemed sound indicators to test emerging Local Plan policies and proposed development site allocations against to ensure they would address the issues that Breckland faces. They covered social, environmental and economic elements.

3.6 The Scoping Report was subject to consultation with statutory bodies (Natural England, Environment Agency and Historic England (at the time, English Heritage)) for a five week period in May/June 2013. The Council also took the opportunity to invite comments from other stakeholders as identified in the Statement of Community Involvement (2013) to generate a more comprehensive response. The feedback received, officer response and recommended action is included at Appendix 8 of the 2013 Scoping Report.

3.7 The 2014 Interim SA Report considered the Scoping Stage and set out some amendments based upon the feedback received to the 2013 consultation. The number of SA Objectives increased from 17 to 19, as follows:

1	Minimise the irreversible loss of undeveloped land and productive agricultural holdings and encourage the recycling/reuse of on site resources to minimise the impacts on the environment and safeguard resources for the future generations.
2	Limit water consumption to the capacity of natural processes and storage systems and maintain and enhance water quality.
3	Ensure the sustainable reuse of water to accommodate additional growth and development with minimal impacts on water quality.
4	Minimise the production of waste and support the recycling of waste.

5	Reduce contributions to climate change and localised air pollution.
6	To adapt to climate change and avoid, reduce and manage flood risk.
7	Protect, conserve, enhance and expand biodiversity and promote and conserve geodiversity.
8	Protect, enhance and increase Green Infrastructure in the District.
9	Maintain, enhance and preserve the distinctiveness, diversity and quality of landscape and townscape character.
10	Conserve and where appropriate enhance the historic environment.
11	Improve the health and well being of the population.
12	Reduce and prevent crime.
13	Improve the quality and quantity of publicly accessible open space.
14	Improve the quality, range and accessibility of essential services and facilities.
15	Redress inequalities related to age, gender, disability, race, faith, location and income.
16	Ensure all groups have access to affordable, decent and appropriate housing that meets their needs.
17	Increase the vitality and viability of existing town centres.
18	Help people gain access to satisfying work appropriate to their skills, potential and place of residence.
19	Improve the efficiency, competitiveness and adaptability of the local economy.

3.9 The Interim SA Report was subject to statutory consultation in 2014, with no objections relating to the Scoping elements.

4. How the environmental report has been taken into account

4.1 An updated version of the SA and its Report (or the “environmental report”) has been prepared at each draft stage in the preparation for the Local Plan:

- Local Plan Interim Sustainability Appraisal, November 2014
- Local Plan Part 1 – Preferred Directions Sustainability Appraisal, December 2015⁷
- Local Plan Part 2 - Emerging Site Options Interim Sustainability Appraisal, December 2015⁸
- Interim Site Allocations and Settlement Boundary Review Sustainability Appraisal, September 2016⁹
- Local Plan Pre Submission Sustainability Appraisal, August 2017¹⁰
- Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal of Main Modifications, February 2019¹¹

4.2 The Local Plan has evolved with input from the SA as an integral part of the process. Recommendations from the SA have been considered alongside information from the Council’s evidence base and consultation responses. This process has informed both the overall scope of the Local Plan and the content of individual policies and the suitability of site allocations.

⁷ Breckland Local Plan Part 1 – Preferred Directions Sustainability Appraisal December 2015, Breckland District Council https://www.breckland.gov.uk/media/7395/LP-S-10-Part-1-Sustainability-Appraisal/pdf/LP_S_10_Part_1_Sustainability_Appraisal.pdf?m=636477385437270000

⁸ Breckland Local Plan Part 2 - Emerging Site Options Interim Sustainability Appraisal December 2015, Breckland District Council https://www.breckland.gov.uk/media/7394/LP-S-11-Part-2-Sustainability-Appraisal/pdf/LP_S_11_Part_2_Sustainability_Appraisal.pdf?m=636477385433230000

⁹ Breckland Local Plan Interim Site Allocations and Settlement Boundary Review Sustainability Appraisal September 2016, Breckland District Council https://www.breckland.gov.uk/media/2463/Breckland-Local-Plan-Preferred-Site-Options-and-Settlement-Boundaries-Sustainability-Appraisal/pdf/Document_for_website.pdf

¹⁰ Local Plan Pre Submission Sustainability Appraisal August 2017, Breckland District Council https://www.breckland.gov.uk/media/7398/LP-S-3-Sustainability-Appraisal-Pre-Submission/pdf/LP_S_3_Sustainability_Appraisal_Pre-Submission.pdf?m=636477385450230000

¹¹ Breckland Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal of Main Modifications February 2019, Capita https://www.breckland.gov.uk/media/13780/Breckland-Sustainability-Appraisal-Main-Modifications-Report/pdf/Breckland_Sustainability_Appraisal_Main_Modifications_Report.pdf?m=637019992864700000

- 4.3 Throughout the Local Plan preparation, the SA helped to inform amendments that would allow for the prevention, reduction or offsetting of any likely significant adverse effects, and for the maximisation of any likely positive effects in implementing the Plan. This has included changes to policy wording, addition of positive statements and removal of statements that are not compatible with the SA objectives, and the identification of the requirement for further assessment, such as flood or traffic assessments.
- 4.4 Within each stage of SA, the corresponding report sets out how the findings of the assessment, including the need for mitigation measures, can be incorporated into the emerging Local Plan and into future planning decision-making.

5. How consultation representations have been taken into account

- 5.1 The adopted Local Plan has evolved through several stages of public consultation. At each stage, consultation on the Local Plan has been accompanied by a SA report.
- 5.2 The key stage in initiating the SA process is the Scoping stage. Scoping Reports have prepared and consulted on in 2013 and 2014. For each, the input of the statutory consultees of Historic England, the Environment Agency and Natural England, plus other stakeholders, was sought. The feedback received was taken into account in finalising the scope of the SA, including the SA framework and SA Objectives. The information relating to this can be found at Appendix 8 of the of the 2013 Scoping Report.
- 5.3 Consultation on SA reports took place alongside consultation on the emerging Local Plan. The consultation invited all statutory consultees, other key stakeholders and the community to comment.
- 5.4 The Council has published on their website consultee feedback relating to each consultation stage. For each comment made, the Council provides a response relating to how any relevant amendment was made to the emerging Local Plan.
- 5.5 Throughout the various consultation exercises, very little feedback was received with regards to either the framework in which the SA was carried out or the conclusions and recommendations contained within the SA reports.

6. The reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted

- 6.1 At each stage of Local Plan preparation, reasonable alternatives to strategic options, policies and site allocations were identified, considered and appraised through the SA, as required by the SEA Regulations. The findings of the assessments were reported in the SA Report at each stage of Local Plan preparation. Each stage was subject to consultation.
- 6.2 The Issues and Options SA 2014 assessed a number of different alternative options relating to the spatial strategy; housing and economic growth scenarios; affordable housing provision; tenure of housing; specialist housing; gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople provision; the rural economy; town centres; growth of market towns; provision of a link road; defining service centre villages; and, defining rural settlements.
- 6.3 The Local Plan Part 1 – Preferred Directions SA 2015 undertook an assessment of at least one alternative option to every proposed policy. Where there was no clear alternative to assess, an assessment was made on the option of relying on the NPPF to guide development. The Local Plan Part 2 - Emerging Site Options Interim SA 2015 assessed a number of potential available development sites.
- 6.4 The Interim Site Allocations and Settlement Boundary Review SA 2016 explored a number of potential available development sites and, for each settlement, alternative options were explored of retaining an existing boundary, continuing with no boundary, removing an existing boundary or amending the existing boundary.
- 6.5 The Local Plan Pre Submission SA 2017 assesses each policy and at least one alternative. A commentary is provided to explain the assessment outcomes and the reason the proposed policy is the preferred option.

6.6 The policies and site allocations taken forward in the adopted Local Plan were selected with consideration to national planning policy, the Local Plan evidence base, consultation feedback and the findings of the SA. Mitigation measures introduced into policy wording aims to mitigate potential negative impacts, and the planning application process will allow further consideration and of site-specific issues and their management through the use of planning conditions and obligations.

7. The measures that are to be taken to monitor the implementation of the Local Plan

- 7.1 The SEA Regulations require the significant effects of implementing a plan or programme to be monitored in order to identify unforeseen adverse effects and to be able to undertake remedial action.
- 7.2 The Local Plan Pre Submission SA 2017 considered monitoring indicators related to the baseline data collected to inform the SA process. The Council identified that this would be a large number of indicators with a significant amount of data required to measure affects. For a more manageable approach, a reduced number of indicators were selected by the Council that would be able to provide succinct monitoring of the 19 SA objectives. These will be updated annually and included with the production of the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR).
- 7.3 At Main Modifications stage, additional text and a policy were added to the Local Plan to strengthen the commitment to the monitoring of the Local Plan's implementation. The new policy requires an immediate partial review of the Plan relating to some housing and economic matters. More generally, the monitoring indicators and triggers included within the AMR will be used to indicate overall levels of growth and the delivery of specific development allocations. A series of measures have been provided within the Local Plan for those situations where targets are not being met, including the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents, single policy reviews or a partial or full review of the Local Plan.
- 7.4 Additional policy requirements were also added at Main Modifications stage that requires the Council to pursue a monitoring and mitigation framework relating to the management of internationally-protected wildlife sites.