

Neighbourhood Planning

Guidance Note 6

# Sustainability Appraisal

September 2016



**This guidance note explains what a Sustainability Appraisal is and how you might undertake one alongside your Neighbourhood Plan.**

If you need this document in an alternative format, such as large print or a different language, contact Breckland Council on 01362 656870.



**A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) considers a plan's wider economic and social effects in addition to its potential environmental impacts. A SA can be produced instead of a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), however, Breckland Council will carry out a SEA screening on every Neighbourhood Plan no matter which route the town/parish council chooses to take.**

## Why carry out a Sustainability Appraisal?

While it is not a regulatory requirement to carry out a SA, it is a fundamental principle of neighbourhood planning that all plans must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development (this is a 'basic condition' for neighbourhood plans). Therefore, it is sensible to have done some assessment of sustainability as part of the neighbourhood plan preparation process. (If a SEA has been deemed not to be required during the screening of your Plan, an SA may not be the appropriate tool to do this.)

## What level of detail is required for a Sustainability Appraisal?

The SA should only focus on what is needed to assess the likely significant effects of your Neighbourhood Plan. It should focus on the environmental, economic and social impacts that are likely to be significant. It does not need to be done in any more detail, or using more resources, than is considered to be appropriate for the context and level of detail in your plan.

## What are the stages of a Sustainability Appraisal?

A SA can be approached in five stages as set out in Appendix 1. The results of which will produce two documents: A Scoping Report (produced at Stage A) and a Sustainability Appraisal Report (produced from Stage C onwards).

**Stage A** in the SA process involves developing the framework for undertaking the appraisal. In this case, the identification of a series of spatial areas and topics on which the appraisal will focus, together with an evidence base to inform the appraisal (see Appendix 3). The framework and evidence base are presented in a Scoping Report.

The evidence base presented in the Scoping Report includes an analysis of the relevant policy context. This should include a description of the current baseline situation, an analysis of how the current situation might evolve in the absence of the plan, and the identification of any problems which the plan may need to address.

Stage A can be broken down into five further sections (see Appendix 2) which, once completed, will produce the Scoping Report.

**Stage B** in the SA process involves undertaking the appraisal itself. This includes identifying and evaluating the impacts of the different options to the plan makers as well as the preferred options/policies which together comprise the plan. The appraisal is organised around the framework developed in the Scoping Report. Mitigation measures are generally in the form of recommendations for changes to the plan in order to improve its sustainability performance. Crucially, the appraisal should be undertaken in

parallel with development of the plan and the appraisal findings should be fed into the emerging plan. In practice, this means undertaking several rounds of appraisal at different stages in the plan-making process.

**Stage C** in the SA process involves documenting the appraisal findings and preparing an SA Report (this incorporates the material required for inclusion in the 'Environment Report' under the 'SEA Directive'). The full SA reports can be prepared to accompany consultation on earlier versions of the plan.

**Stage D** in the SA process involves consulting on the 'pre-submission' version of the plan and the accompanying SA Report. However, as stated above, SA reports can be prepared to accompany consultation on earlier versions of the plan.

**Stage E** in the SA process involves monitoring the adopted plan including its sustainability impacts. This is achieved through the Local Plan and Breckland Council's Annual Monitoring Report (AMR).

There is a requirement for certain information to be contained in the report that is the same across all SAs that are produced. There are also sections that need to be specific to the Neighbourhood Plan and Area.

For the information required to create the spatial portrait you will be required to search different sources to gain the information that you require. Breckland Council has compiled a list that contains websites and resources that you may find useful (see Appendix 3).

For every policy or emerging policy that is to be included within a Neighbourhood Plan, there is a requirement to assess the

impacts that this is likely to have from an environmental, social and economic aspect. The framework should assist you to decide which policies should be taken forward and which, if any, should not be.

## Where can I find guidance for undertaking a Sustainability Appraisal?

Breckland Council has put together a template for your Scoping Report and for the Sustainability Appraisal Framework. **These should be used as a guide only.** As previously mentioned, a Sustainability Appraisal should not be done in any more detail than is considered appropriate for the detail of your Plan. Neighbourhood Plans vary significantly and therefore so do their corresponding Sustainability Appraisals.

It is important to remember when completing a Sustainability Appraisal:

- It is an aid to producing your Neighbourhood Plan so its production should run alongside the various stages of producing your Plan.
- It should show how your plan offers **additional** environmental, social and economic benefits from those in national and local planning policies.
- It should show that you have considered various options in your plan making process and consulted with relevant bodies on these options.

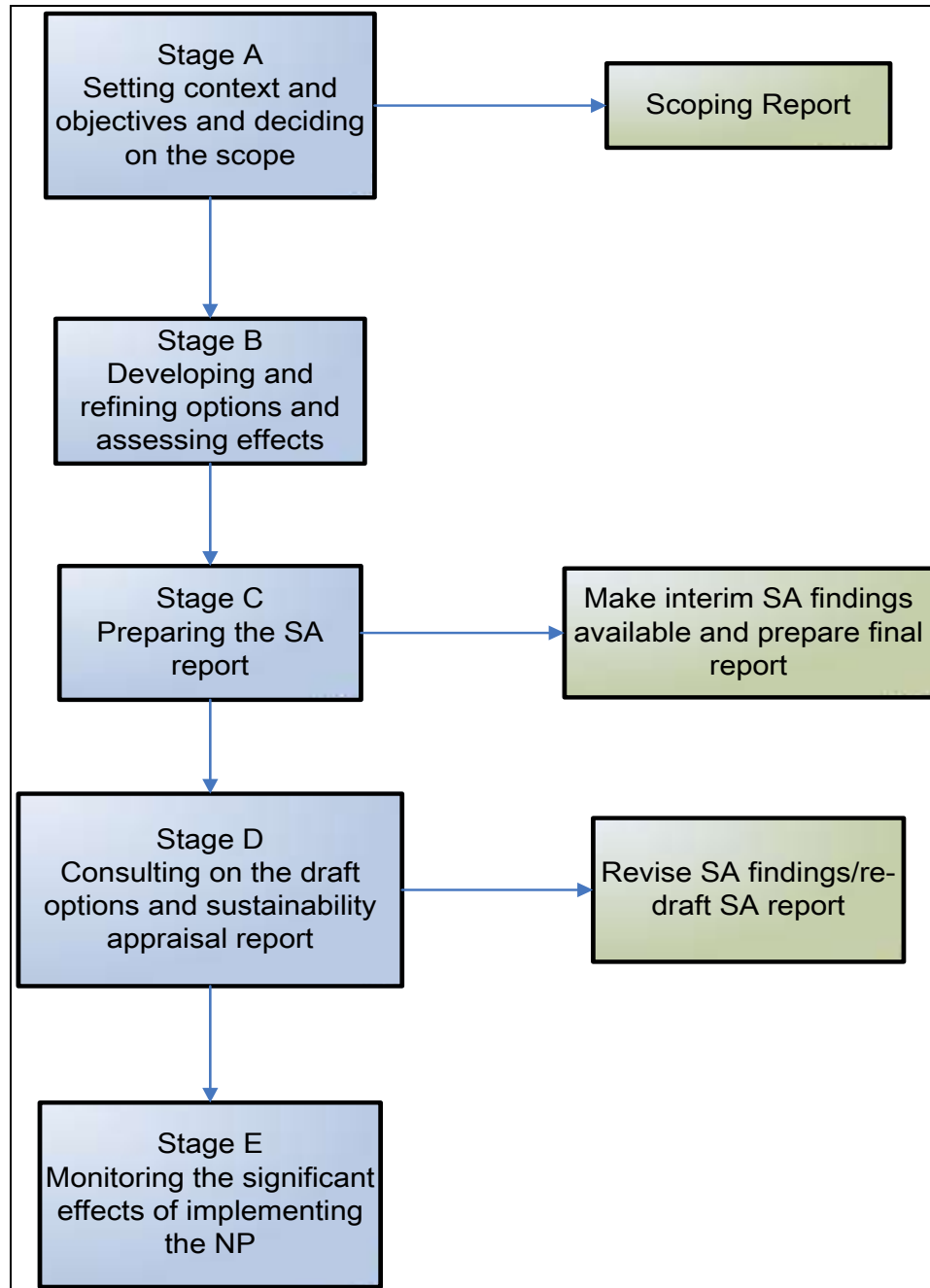
CABEs Neighbourhood Planning Toolkits-DIYSA Sustainability Appraisal (including strategic environmental assessment) of Neighbourhood Plans offers easy to follow guidance. However, this document was put together prior to the final regulations

being drawn up for Neighbourhood Plans and therefore is out of date in some areas. If the guide contradicts other information you are being given (namely that a SA is not an essential requirement for a

Neighbourhood Plan) this may be the reason. A pdf copy of this can be found at <https://levetttherivel.files.wordpress.com/2015/09/diysa.pdf>.

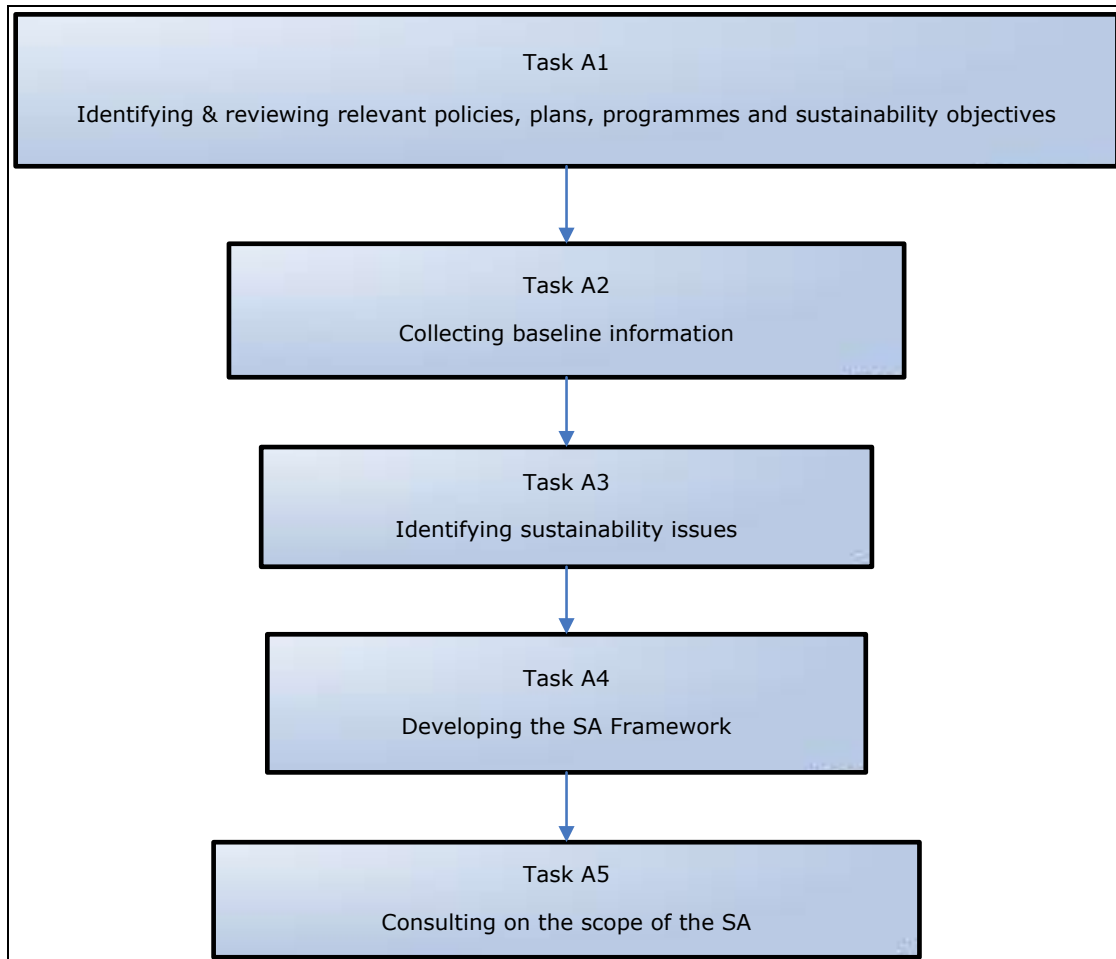
# Appendix 1

## Stages in producing a Sustainability Appraisal



## Appendix 2

### Stage A scoping tasks





## Appendix 3

### Potential Information Sources for Sustainability Appraisal:

Anglian Water: [www.anglianwater.co.uk](http://www.anglianwater.co.uk)

Census 2001/2011: <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk>

Defra: <http://www.airquality.co.uk>

Historic England: [www.historicengland.org.uk](http://www.historicengland.org.uk)

Environment Agency: [www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)

Local Authority Annual Monitoring Report (AMR):

<http://www.breckland.gov.uk/article/2218/Local-Development-Scheme-LDS-Annual-Monitoring-Report-AMR->

[Library-Publications](https://www.breckland.gov.uk/article/2455/Documents-Library-Publications)

Local Authority evidence base: [https://www.breckland.gov.uk/article/2455/Documents-](https://www.breckland.gov.uk/article/2455/Documents-Library-Publications)

[Library-Publications](https://www.breckland.gov.uk/article/2455/Documents-Library-Publications)

Natural England: [www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)

Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership: [www.norfolkbiodiversity.org](http://www.norfolkbiodiversity.org)

Norfolk Insight: [www.norfolkinsight.org.uk](http://www.norfolkinsight.org.uk)

NOMIS (official labour market statistics): <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk>