

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



Introduction

2.1 The concept of Sustainable Development was first internationally defined in 1987 through 'Our Common Future', (or the Brundtland Report). This also set out the most well known definition of sustainable development:

"Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"

or in other words, ensuring that actions taken today have regard to their implications for tomorrow.

2.2 The UK's was one of the first Governments to respond to the challenge of sustainable development with the publication in 1990 of an UK Environment Strategy through the White Paper 'This Common Inheritance' and subsequently 'Sustainable Development: The UK Strategy' in 1994. May 1999 saw the production of 'A Better Quality of Life, a Strategy for Sustainable Development' aiming to build on the achievements of the earlier strategies.

2.3 This Chapter explains the broad principles of sustainable development and how the Plan can progress towards this goal. Policy SD1 draws together key sustainability objectives to supplement subsequent Plan policies and provide a starting point against which to assess development proposals.

Sustainable development aim and objectives

2.4 The broad sustainable development aim of the Plan is:-

1. To contribute towards ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come.

2.5 The broad sustainable development objectives of the Plan are:-

1. To ensure effective protection of the environment

- As reflected in subsequent Plan Policies, certain environmental resources within the District are identified as extremely important and particularly sensitive to change. Any loss or damage to them would be acceptable only in very special circumstances. Within the wider environment there may be more scope for change to meet social and economic objectives although this should not be at the expense of an overall deterioration in environmental quality and character.

- Where environmental pollution or harmful effects on important environmental resources is unavoidable, a 'Polluter Pays' principle should be applied to ensure that measures required to minimise and compensate for environmental damage are borne by those who cause it. Compensatory measures should, as a minimum, seek to ensure that no net environmental loss occurs.

- Development proposals creating significant environmental effects will require to be accompanied by an Environmental Assessment, in accordance with Government regulations and advice.

2. To promote the efficient use of natural resources

- Non-renewable energy resources and materials should be used efficiently. Their appropriate re-use / recycling and the use of renewable forms of energy should be encouraged.

3. Meet people's needs

- 'A Better Quality of Life' referred to in paragraph 2.2 above places greater emphasis than the previous UK Strategy on the social dimension of sustainable development and in particular, the need to improve the quality of life experienced by all members of society. This includes promoting regeneration and tackling problems of deprivation and social exclusion through enabling good access to high quality services and community facilities, adequate employment and housing opportunities and, well designed local environments.

4. To encourage economic growth and employment opportunities

- Vital to improving quality of life is creating high and sustained levels of local economic growth. Paragraph 4.9 of PPG12 'Development Plans' notes that in preparing the Local Plan this should take account of the need to revitalise and broaden the local economy, the need to stimulate employment opportunities, and the importance of encouraging industrial and commercial development.

5. Reduce the Need to Travel

- A sustainable pattern of development should seek to encourage a reduction in the need to travel, particularly by the car. This requires ensuring that new development is located near to complementary facilities (eg housing near jobs, schools, shops, leisure facilities etc) and that it is either well served by public transport or there are proposals to improve public transport.

Sustainability appraisal of policies and proposals

2.6 PPG12 requires the environmental implications of Local Plan policies and proposals to be comprehensively and consistently assessed. This includes identifying, quantifying, weighing up and reporting on environmental costs and benefits through a systematic method of appraisal.

2.7 The form of the environmental audit used to appraise the previous Shepway District Local Plan to 2001 has been refined to take account of DETR ODPM good practice guidance and expanded to encompass economic and social issues (as advocated in PPG12) to fully examine sustainability implications. This sustainability appraisal has been used to help inform the content of the Plan's policies and proposals.

Role of the local plan

2.8 The planning system is a key instrument in helping to ensure sustainable development. The Local Plan has a particularly important role to play through guiding the development and use of land, and strongly influencing decisions made on planning applications. The Local Plan should take account of all environmental concerns and contribute to the objectives of ensuring that development and growth are sustainable through for example promoting the use of previously developed land, mixed uses, higher densities and good design.

2.9 'Agenda 21', produced following the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, set out a comprehensive global action plan for the pursuit of sustainable development. Chapter 28 encourages local authorities to work with their local communities to create a sustainable strategy for their area - Local Agenda 21. The Council formally adopted LA-21 in 1994 and is now committed to developing LA-21 activities in all of its main functions. In 1999 the District Council involved the local community to help identify the main sustainability issues facing the District. Based on the results of this consultation, a LA-21 Strategy for the District and Communities of Shepway has been prepared for the period 2000 to 2005. This Strategy acknowledges the central role of the Local Plan with regard to sustainable development in the district.

2.10 Whilst the importance of the Local Plan in securing a sustainable pattern of development is clear, it does face a number of constraints in fully achieving this, including:

- **the need for development** – sustainable development is ultimately about improving quality of life. This not only includes protecting and enhancing the environment but also meeting peoples needs for new homes, jobs, services and community facilities etc. Ideally development should aspire to environmental, economic and social objectives. In many cases however, there will inevitably be a certain degree of 'trade off' between development and environmental protection. This means that it may not always be possible to ensure that all policies are 'sustainable' in all respects but instead 'best' choices must be made which seek to minimise environmental damage;

- **public preference** - whilst the importance of conserving the environment is becoming increasingly recognised by people, lifestyle changes which would need to be made such as reducing car use are presently unacceptable to many, particularly when any environmental benefits of positive actions taken today may not be directly evident or will often not become apparent for several years;

- **previous development commitments** - many of the development sites contained in this Plan already have planning permission (which can be withdrawn only upon payment of considerable compensation), or are

carried forward from allocations in the Shepway District Local Plan to 2001, having been subject to a Public Local Inquiry. Some of these decisions will inevitably not have been considered against the most up-to-date thinking on sustainable development;

- **scope of the planning system** - the planning system aims to guide the development and use of land but cannot influence all actions which have sustainability consequences.

2.11 Despite these constraints, it is vital that this Plan plays its fullest possible role in contributing towards a sustainable pattern and form of development in the district. Sustainable development will not be achieved by 2011, but the Plan must seek to progress towards this longer term goal. Policy SD 1 provides the starting point against which proposals for development should be assessed. Development proposals which seriously conflict with the environmental criteria set out in this Policy will not be allowed unless the Local Planning Authority is satisfied that measures will be taken to minimise and compensate for negative environmental effects.

POLICY SD 1 All development proposals should take account of the broad aim of sustainable development - ensuring that development contributes towards ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come. This involves meeting economic and social objectives and helping people meet their personal aspirations through accommodating the district's need for commercial and industrial development, new homes and other land uses and improving quality of life for all members of society whilst respecting the following environmental criteria:

- a) Shape new development patterns in a way which reduces the need to travel, especially by car, and increases the attractiveness of walking, cycling and public transport;
- b) Preserve and enhance built and cultural heritage including Listed Buildings and their settings, conservation areas, sites and settings of nationally and locally important ancient monuments and archaeological sites, historic parks and gardens and, historic landscapes;
- c) Protect and enhance areas of countryside that are of special quality, particularly the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Special Landscape Areas, Local Landscape Areas, Heritage Coast and undeveloped coast, ancient woodlands and, the best and most versatile agricultural land. Sustain the character and diversity of the wider countryside in general;
- d) Protect and enhance designated or proposed sites of international, national, countywide and local wildlife importance and plant or animal life protected by law. Maintain the District's overall stock of nature conservation resources;
- e) Locate new development within or around existing built-up areas, especially on previously developed land, in preference to 'greenfield' sites;
- f) Maintain and improve the character and vitality of the built environment, promote a high quality of design and ensure that development density is appropriate to its location;
- g) Encourage energy efficiency and conservation, re-use and recycling of materials and, the sensitive development of renewable energy resources;
- h) Maintain and enhance water, soil and air quality;
- i) Maintain and enhance the provision of recreational open space, amenity land and tree and hedgerow cover;
- j) Prevent negative impacts on coastal protection, flood defence, land drainage and groundwater resources.
- k) Safeguard and enhance the amenity of residents

Development proposals that would significantly conflict with one or more of environmental criteria a)- k) above will only be permitted where it can be shown that:

- i. there is an overriding economic or social need;
- ii. negative impacts are minimised as far as possible and;
- iii. measures will be taken to compensate for the adverse environmental effect. Compensatory measures

should, as a minimum, ensure that no net environmental loss occurs.