

## **Appendix G**

# **Summary of Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessments considerations**

## Sustainability Appraisal Considerations

1. Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is a means of ensuring that the likely social, economic and environmental effects of the Local Plan are identified, described and appraised, and also incorporates a process set out under a European Directive<sup>1</sup> and related UK regulations<sup>2</sup> called Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). Where negative effects are identified, measures are proposed to avoid, minimise or mitigate such effects. Where any positive effects are identified, measures are considered that could enhance such effects. SA is therefore an integral part of the preparation of the Local Plan and has been undertaken at all of the key stages in the development of the Local Plan.
2. The South Oxfordshire Local Plan should contribute to a sustainable future for the plan area. To support this objective, the Council is required to carry out a SA of the Local Plan<sup>3</sup>. The SA process has been carried out in an iterative way to inform the Plan's development.
3. Councillors should have regard to the SA when considering the adoption of the Plan.
4. The Final SA consists of (please see hyperlinks to the full documents):
  - [CSD04.2 Sustainability Appraisal - Main Report, Submission Version.pdf, March 2019](#) (13Mb)
  - [CSD04.3 Sustainability Appraisal - Appendices, Submission Version.pdf, March 2019](#) (9Mb)
  - [Main Modifications Sustainability Appraisal Addendum, September 2020](#)
  - [Post-Consultation Main Modifications Sustainability Appraisal Addendum, December 2020](#)
5. When preparing a Local Plan, the SA is published alongside formal consultation and publication stages and comments are invited on it. An important part of considering the SA is considering the comments received about it. A summary of the responses about the SA made at the Regulation 19 (Publication Stage) of the Local Plan in January- February 2019 is available in:
  - [CSD04.3 Sustainability Appraisal - Appendices, Submission Version.pdf, March 2019](#) (9Mb) Appendix B pages B132 to B139; and
  - [CSD11.1 Regulation 22 Consultation Statement, Appendix 3 Summary of Representations.pdf](#) (18Mb) see internal pages 928-933

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<sup>1</sup> Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment.

<sup>2</sup> Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (statutory instrument 2004 No. 1633).

<sup>3</sup>The requirement for SA of local plans is set out under section 19(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

6. A total of 31 separate consultation responses on the SA were recorded at the Regulation 19 stage in January-February 2019. The key issues raised on the SA are summarised below, together with the Council's response:
- A number of responses said that the SA should have included consideration of impacts on the Green Belt. The SA was amended to include an assessment of effects on the Green Belt in response to these comments.
  - A number of responses suggested that non-strategic sites should have been considered in the SA (i.e. sites below 500 dwellings) and that the SA should consider the role of larger villages. The Council was of the view that the Local Plan should focus on strategic sites and no amendments to the approach to the SA of sites was needed.
  - A number of alternative locations for development were put forward, including Didcot and Reading. These locations had been considered as part of the SA.
  - Natural England requested that additional work be undertaken in relation to the impacts of development on Sidlings Copse and Pond Site of Special Scientific Interest. The Council undertook the additional work.
  - Historic England commended on the potential for significant effects in relation to the landscape and historic environment at Culham. The Council prepared an updated Landscape Capacity Study to inform its response to these comments and the allocation was also amended.
  - Oxfordshire County Council highlighted the potential for significant constraints in relation to cultural heritage to development at Harrington, Wick Farm, Lower Elsfeld, Northfield and Berinsfield and the SA was amended to recognise these constraints. The County Council also highlighted the challenges associated with the provision of a new bus service at land North of Bayswater Brook and the SA was amended accordingly.
  - There were a number of detailed comments in relation to the assessment of Chalgrove Airfield, including impacts on Martin Baker. The Council considered that these effects had been adequately considered in the SA.
7. At the final consultation stage in September-November 2020, we received representations from nine separate respondents on the SA Addendum in respect of the proposed Main Modifications. The responses can be found [here](#)<sup>4</sup>. One developer for an omission site in Goring objected to the consideration in the SA addendum of changes to Policy H4. Otherwise, the comments of objection largely concerned the SA's assessment of Policy STRAT7: Land at Chalgrove Airfield. A number of respondents disagreed with the conclusions of the assessment criteria, particularly regarding sustainability objectives 3, 6, 8 and 13.
8. **Objective 3: To improve accessibility for everyone to health, education, cultural and community facilities and services.** Four respondents stated that proposals include plans to relocate village facilities e.g. the current GP surgery,

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<sup>4</sup> See respondents: Chalgrove Parish Council, Great Haseley Parish Council, Chalgrove Airfield Action Group, Highways England, Wates Developments Limited, Oxford Science Village Partners, Ryan McCarthy, Anthea Dudley, Clare Hutchings

which would result in the loss of a community facility and the objective should be scored negatively to reflect this.

9. **Objective 6: To improve travel choice and accessibility, reduce the need to travel by car and shorten the length and duration of journeys.** Five respondents disagreed that the Chalgrove Airfield site would reduce the need to travel or would encourage sustainable travel, but said it would instead achieve the opposite.
10. **Objective 8: To improve efficiency in land use and to conserve and enhance the District's open spaces and countryside in particular those areas designated for their landscape importance, minerals, biodiversity and soil quality.** Five respondents objected to the Chalgrove Airfield site being referred to as brownfield, and therefore objected to the conclusion made that the redevelopment of the brownfield site is a 'significant positive'. One referred to a net loss of biodiversity and lack of proposals to replace the loss of habitat with like-for-like habitat.
11. **Objective 13: on economic development,** four respondents disagreed with the positive score for this, pointing to a loss of existing employment at Martin Baker.
12. Two respondents supported the SA's assessment conclusions. Highways England stated that they remain supportive of the inclusion of SA objective 6 (transport) and the conclusions of the assessment of policies INF1, TRANS4 and DES1. Another respondent agreed with the SA's overall conclusion that the proposed Main Mods do not impact on the previous conclusions of the SA.
13. SA consultants Wood reviewed the consultation responses on the SA at the Main Modifications stage and concluded that the responses do not have any further implications for the findings of the SA
14. A screening assessment by SA consultants Wood considers that further SA is not needed to address the further changes to the Main Modifications made by the Inspector Post Consultation. Please see technical note available at:
  - **Post-Consultation Main Modifications Sustainability Appraisal Addendum, December 2020**
15. The [Inspector's Report](#) sets out the Inspector's assessment on the legal compliance of the Plan. He refers to SA as follows:

**Para 25.** The Council carried out a sustainability appraisal of the Plan, prepared a report of the findings of the appraisal, and published the report along with the plan and other submission documents under regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The appraisal was updated to assess the main modifications.

## Habitats Regulations Assessment Considerations

16. Development plans, such as the Local Plan, are also subject to a process called Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA). The purpose of HRA is to identify any potential adverse effects of a plan on 'European sites'. European sites comprise those wildlife sites designated for their biodiversity value at European or international level.
17. Councillors should have regard to the HRA when considering the adoption of the Plan.
18. The final HRA consists of (please see hyperlinks to the full documents):
  - **[CSD05.2 Habitats Regulations Assessment \(HRA\), Submission Version.pdf, March 2019](#)** (8Mb)
  - **[Habitats Regulations Assessment Addendum, September 2020](#)**
19. A summary of the responses made on the HRA at the Regulation 19 (Publication Stage) of the Plan in January- February 2019 is available at internal page 934 of:
  - **[CSD11.1 Regulation 22 Consultation Statement, Appendix 3 Summary of Representations.pdf](#)** (18Mb)
20. We received two further consultation responses on the HRA Addendum at the Main Mods consultation stage in Sept – Nov 2020<sup>5</sup>. Both were in support, with one from statutory consultee Natural England confirming that they are satisfied with the conclusions of the amendment to the Habitat Regulations Assessment.
21. The [Inspector's Report](#) sets out the Inspector's assessment on the legal compliance of the Plan. He refers to HRA as follows:
  - Para 26. The Habitats Regulations Appropriate Assessment (document CSD05.2, March 2019) sets out that a full assessment has been undertaken and concludes that the Plan is not likely to lead to adverse effects on the integrity of any European sites, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects. The Addendum to the Habitats Regulations Assessment (September 2020) comes to the same conclusion in respect of the Plan, taking into account the main modifications.

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<sup>5</sup> from Natural England and Oxford Science Village Partners, the responses can be found [here](#)

**Summary and Conclusion**

22. SA and HRA have been undertaken at all key stages of the Local Plan's development, and have shaped, tested and influenced the Plan. The work has been undertaken by specialist consultants.

23. The Inspector's Report acknowledges that these assessments have been undertaken and their conclusions.