



**Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic  
Environmental Assessment of the  
Draft Royston Town Centre Strategy  
Supplementary Planning Document**

**Scoping Report**

**July 2007**

# **Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment of Draft Royston Town Centre Strategy Supplementary Planning Document**

## **Scoping Report**

A report by North Hertfordshire District Council

July 2007

Planning Policy & Projects

North Hertfordshire District Council

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. What this report covers

This report describes the scope and methods that will be used in the sustainability appraisal of the Draft Royston Town Centre Strategy Supplementary Planning Document. Much of the report is similar to the Scoping Report for the Letchworth Garden City Town Centre Strategy. This was based on the appraisal for the initial development plan documents<sup>1</sup> as prepared by CAG consultants for North Herts District Council. The differences between this report and the Scoping Report for Appraisal of Core Strategy and Development Control Policies are summarised in the box below. A common baseline and methodology has been developed for all of the Council's Local Development Documents, however each will be subject to rigorously independent appraisal of the significant environmental issues raised by that document.

<b>Summary of differences between this report (Scoping Report for draft Royston Town Centre Strategy SPD) and Scoping Report for Appraisal of Core Strategy and Development Control Policies</b>	
Process to be used	There are minor differences in the process.
Strategic Objectives	This report includes the proposed objectives for the SPD, with one additional sub-objective.
Strategic Options	This report includes the proposed strategic options for the SPD
Appraisal Framework	One additional sub-objective has been added to the appraisal framework in this report.
Sustainability Issues	The sustainability issues contained in this report, include most of those from the appraisal of the initial DPDs, as well as some additional issues identified in public workshops <sup>2</sup> . (See Appendix 1)
Review of Plans, Programmes and Policies	Relevant Plans, Programmes and Policies to this SPD are shown in the list on page 13 and included in Appendix 2. This includes a number of new documents (including new or final versions of planning guidance) not contained in the Context Review for the Initial Development Plan Documents, which are shown in italics.
Baseline Review	This report includes three additional indicators: see page 21 and Appendix 3.

<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/council/default.asp?step=4&pid=1074>

<sup>2</sup> A series of public workshops were held in early 2007 to discuss issues relevant for inclusion in the preparation of the draft Royston Town Centre Strategy SPD. The public workshops comprised individuals who represented various voluntary and commercial interest groups, as well as local residents, district councillors and members of the Royston Town Council.

## 1.2. Background

Strategic Environmental Appraisal (SEA) is a process of identifying and evaluating the environmental impacts of a plan or programme. In 2001, the EU adopted Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (referred to as the 'SEA Directive' in this report).

The Directive came into force in the UK on 21 July 2004 and applies to a range of English plans and programmes including Local Development Frameworks (LDFs). In North Hertfordshire, the LDF will replace the existing Local Plan.

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) extends the concept of SEA to include economic and social concerns. Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, Local Authorities must undertake SA for each of their Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) – the constituent parts of the LDF. SA is therefore a statutory requirement for all parts of the LDF along with SEA.

The Government has published Guidance<sup>3</sup> (referred to as "the Guidance" in this report) on undertaking SA of the LDFs. The approach in the Guidance is to incorporate the requirements of the SEA Directive into a wider Sustainability Appraisal process.

## 1.3. What is Sustainability Appraisal?

Sustainability appraisal is a systematic and iterative appraisal process, incorporating the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive. The main purpose of sustainability appraisal is to appraise the social, environmental and economic effects of plan strategies and policies, from the outset of the preparation process, so that decisions can be made that accord with the objectives of sustainable development.

*Planning Policy Statement 12 – Local Development Frameworks*

The aim of Sustainability Appraisal is to make sure that plans are doing as much as they can to support the delivery of social, economic and environmental objectives at the same time. Although planning authorities do their best to address these issues, it is easy to miss opportunities for better supporting social, economic and environmental objectives, and for reducing any conflicts. Sustainability Appraisal offers a systematic way for checking and improving on plans as they are being developed.

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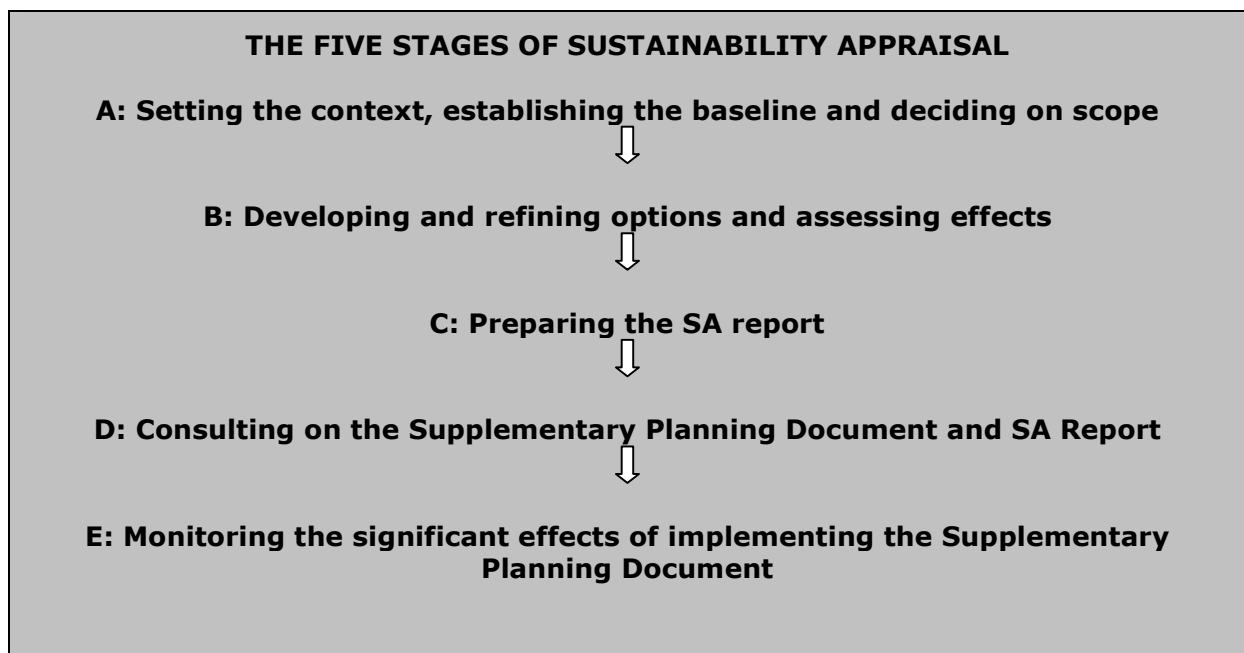
<sup>3</sup> *Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents: Guidance for Regional Planning Bodies and Local Planning Authorities* November 2005 ODPM

Ideally, as a result of the appraisal, conflicts with sustainability objectives will be removed, but this is not always possible. The conflicts and the decisions made must be explained in reports on the SA, and in consultations on the plan. As a result the public and other stakeholders will find it easier to appreciate the pros and cons of the plan and to make up their own minds about whether the planning authority has made the right decisions.

## 1.4. The Five Stages of Appraisal

The national planning guidance on preparing Local Development Frameworks (PPS12) says that to be effective sustainability appraisal should be fully integrated into the plan-making process. It should be started as soon as a new or revised local development document is first considered, and should provide input at each stage when decisions are taken.

There are five stages (A to E) to the Appraisal, shown in the box below. The stages follow those indicated in the Guidance.



The Guidance outlines the following steps to the first two parts of the process.

<b>Stage A: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope</b>
<p>A1. Identify and review other relevant plans, programmes and policies, and sustainable development objectives that will affect or influence the DPD/SPD. <b>(Context Review)</b></p> <p>A2. Collect relevant social, environmental and economic baseline information and produce a characterisation of North Hertfordshire <b>(Baseline)</b></p> <p>A3. Identify key <b>sustainability issues</b> and problems for the SA to address.</p> <p>A4. Develop the <b>SA framework</b>, consisting of the sustainability objectives, indicators and targets.</p> <p>A5. Produce a <b>Scoping Report</b> and consult relevant authorities, the public and other key stakeholders on the scope of the appraisal and the key issues and possible options for solutions.</p>
<b>Stage B: Developing and refining options and assessing effects</b>
<p>B1. <b>Test the DPD or SPD</b> objectives against the SA framework.</p> <p>B2. <b>Develop the DPD or SPD options</b></p> <p>B3. <b>Predict the effects of the draft DPD or SPD (preferred options)</b> against the sustainability objectives using any available research information</p> <p>B4. <b>Evaluate the effects of the draft DPD or SPD</b></p> <p>B5. <b>Consider ways of mitigating adverse effects and maximising beneficial effects</b> of the draft DPD or SPD</p> <p>B6. Develop proposals for <b>monitoring</b> the significant effects of implementing the DPD or SPD.</p>

## 2. Appraising the Draft Royston Town Centre Strategy Supplementary Planning Document

### 2.1. How the Supplementary Planning Document fits into the Local Development Framework

North Hertfordshire is in the process of developing its Local Development Framework (LDF). The Council has an agreed Local Development Scheme which describes the documents that will make up the LDF and when they will be developed. A Scoping report and a report on appraisal of options for DPDs have already been produced<sup>4</sup>.

The Draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on a Town Centre Strategy for Royston is proposed in the revised Local Development Scheme to be one of the local development documents in the Local Development Framework. The purpose of SPDs is to provide further details of policies in a DPD, or policies in an existing development plan (called a "saved plan"<sup>5</sup>). In this case, the Supplementary Planning Document will provide further guidance and policy on the existing policy i.e. Policy 42 part (i) which seeks to support and maintain shopping as the main activity in town centres, providing it safeguards and enhances the environment of towns. In the autumn of 2007, the Draft East of England Plan is due to be adopted. At such time policy SS5 will become relevant, which requires town centre strategies to be prepared as local development documents.

Over time precisely what the town centre strategy will be supplementary to will change, and the strategy may require amendment. For example the overall retail strategy, policies for change of use in town centres and allocation of sites for retail and other uses are proposed to be included in various development plan documents. An examination of these documents may require changes to this strategy. These underlying development plan documents will in themselves require SA/SEA; the SA/SEA for this Supplementary Planning document may require amendment if there are any consequential amendments to the town centre strategy to maintain general conformity and these are changes which have significant environmental effects. This will not, in line with government advice on implementation of the directive, require re-appraisal of the higher level policies.

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<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/council/default.asp?step=4&pid=1074>

<sup>5</sup> The policies of an existing Local Plan continue to have effect for a minimum of 3 years from the enactment of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act (September 2004) or the adoption of replacement documents under the new system, whichever is sooner.

## 2.2. Further Guidance on Appraisal of Supplementary Planning Documents

The Guidance says that an appraisal of a SPD should follow the same steps as the appraisal of a DPD (listed in the previous section).

The Guidance recognises that where appraisals of the DPD have already been undertaken, the need for new work in appraising a SPD may be limited in some cases. However, it clarifies that in cases (such as this) *where the SPD has been prepared on the basis of a DPD or saved plan, policy or policies which have not been subject to SA, then the authority will need to carry out a SA of that policy or policies and report on those*<sup>6</sup>.

In reference to stage B2 (development of options) the Guidance states that it is essential for it to set out to improve on the situation which would exist if there were no SPD. It should also aim to improve on the effects of implementing the existing parent DPD policy or 'saved plan policy'. To test this, options considered often include scenarios termed 'no plan' and 'business as usual'.

## 2.3 Screening of the requirements for SEA

Responsible Authorities must carry out screening to determine whether plans or programmes of the types covered by Article 3(3) and 3(4) (see below) are likely to have significant environmental effects, and hence whether SEA is required under the Directive.

SEA is not required for plans or programmes which determine the use of small areas at a local level and which do not have significant environmental effects.

Annex II of the Directive lists criteria for determining the likely significance of the environmental effects of plans or programmes. The Responsible Authority must make its conclusions on a determination available to the public, including reasons for not requiring SEA. The SEA Regulations also detail publicity requirements for determinations, and make provision for a direction by the Secretary of State or devolved Ministers.

The European Commission guidance (paragraphs 3.33–3.35) suggests that plans or programmes which determine the use of small areas at local level might include:

*"a building plan which, for a particular, limited area, outlines details of how buildings must be constructed, determining, for example, their height, width or design.... The complete phrase... makes it clear that the whole of a local*

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<sup>6</sup> *Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents: Guidance for Regional Planning Bodies and Local Planning Authorities, November 2005 ODPM.*

*authority area could not be excluded (unless it were itself small). ...The key criterion for the application of the Directive, however, is not the size of area covered but whether the plan or programme would be likely to have significant environmental effects”.*

The guidance for specific opportunity sites within the draft SPD contains a number of detailed design matters. Were these the sole content of the strategy, and these concerned buildings would not have a significant environmental effect, then assessment would not be required.

The strategy itself as a whole could have a significant environmental effect (positive or negative) on Royston town centre. Therefore the screening opinion is that SA/SEA is required.

*Similarly, ‘minor modifications’ should be considered in the context of the plan or programme which is being modified and of the likelihood of their having significant environmental effects [...] Article 3(3) clarifies the position by recognising that a modification may be of such small order that it is unlikely to have significant environmental effects, but requiring that where the modification ... is likely to have significant environmental effects then an assessment should be carried out regardless of the scale of the modification” (European Commission guidance, paragraph 3.36).*

The SPD may need to be reappraised in the future if it is changed, such as changes to bring it into general conformity to DPD policies and land allocations as they are progressed through the LDF. At each change the relevant authority (North Herts District Council) will need to determine if the minor modifications exemption applies. In which case the sustainability appraisal report can simply state the screening opinion.

As certain minor site specific changes might not in future require appraisal this reflects on the appropriate level of detail necessary in appraising the policies/guidance in the draft Town Centre Strategy and in particular the development opportunities. The SA/SEA should therefore focus on those matters with significant environmental effects, and at a site specific level the scoping of environmental issues suggests that these matters are mainly concerned with issues such as impact of traffic, impact on the streetscene and impact of the bulk, height of buildings on the conservation importance of the town.

## **2.4. The Appraisal Process to be used**

The appraisal process will take account of the ODPM Guidance and, in doing so, will also meet the requirements of the SEA Directive.

The steps of the process will be the same as used for the appraisal of the initial Development Plan Documents undertaken by CAG consultants, and will draw on the work already undertaken for the appraisal of the initial

Development Plan Documents (contained in the Scoping Report for that appraisal<sup>7</sup>), and for the Letchworth Garden City Town Centre Strategy. The elements of this work are:

- The Appraisal Framework (step A4): the same framework will be used;
- Sustainability Issues (step A3): the sustainability issues contained in this report, include most of those from the appraisal of the initial DPDs, as well as some additional issues identified in public workshops;
- Context Review (A1): the documents previously reviewed for the Initial Development Plan documents have been scoped, and those relevant to this SPD have been retained in the review. In addition a number of additional new or area specific documents have been reviewed;
- Baseline Review (A2): three additional indicators have been used.

Each of these elements is described in subsequent sections of this report.

At Stage B2 of the process (developing options), three alternative options will be appraised. This includes the “business as usual” option of not having a SPD. In addition, as a consequence of the advice quoted above, the existing ‘saved’ policy, which is the parent policy to the SPD, will be appraised at this stage.

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<sup>7</sup> Available on <http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/council/default.asp?step=4&pid=1074>

### 3. Appraisal Documents

There are two formal documents required:

**1. This Scoping Report**

**2. The Sustainability Appraisal Report**

This Scoping Report is the formal report on the first part (Stage A) of the process. It gives an overview of the scope of the appraisal process. It must also include the objectives of the plans to be appraised, the broad strategic options which will be considered, and the methodology that will be used. This report is the scoping report for the SPD on the Draft Town Centre Strategy for Royston.

The Sustainability Appraisal Report will also meet the requirements of the SEA Directive to produce an Environmental Report. The report will describe the results of the second part of the appraisal process (Stage B, shown in the table in the previous section). It will include a non-technical summary, a summary of the results of each element of the appraisal process (including information on Stage A, amended to respond to consultation comments) and proposals for monitoring the impacts of the plan. The testing matrices from Stages B1–B5 will be made available in separate technical appendices.

The level of detail will be appropriate to an appraisal of a SPD. This means that the policy and guidance in the SPD will be tested in order to assess any significant environmental and sustainability impacts. Of course some of these impacts, for example climate change, will relate to a wider area than just the District itself. A list of the contents of the SA report is shown in the table below.

<b>Contents of the Sustainability Appraisal Report</b>
<b>Components making up the Environmental Report</b> Table sign-posting the components of the SA Report which make up the Environmental Report for the purposes of the SEA Directive
<b>1. Summary and outcomes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Non-technical summary</li><li>• A statement of the likely significant effects</li><li>• Statement on the difference the process has made</li><li>• How to comment on the report</li></ul>
<b>2. Appraisal Methodology</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Approach adopted to the SA</li><li>• When the SA was carried out</li><li>• Who carried out the SA</li><li>• Who was consulted, when and how</li><li>• Difficulties encountered in compiling information or carrying out the assessment</li></ul>

### **3. Background**

- Purpose of the SA and the SA Report
- Plan objectives and outline of contents
- Compliance with the SEA Directive/Regulations

### **4. Sustainability objectives, baseline and context**

This section will be the information in the Scoping Report:

- Links to other policies, plans and programmes and sustainability objectives and how these have been taken into account
- Description of the social, environmental and economic baseline characteristics and the predicted future baseline (i.e. trend information, where it is available)
- Main social, environmental and economic issues and problems identified
- Limitations of the data, assumptions made etc.
- The SA framework, including objectives, targets and indicators

### **5. Plan issues and options**

- Main strategic options considered and how they were identified
- Comparison of the social, environmental and economic effects of the options (summary of testing matrices)
- How social, environmental and economic issues were considered in choosing the preferred options
- Other options considered, and why these were rejected
- Proposed mitigation measures (summary of testing matrices)

### **6. Plan policies**

- Significant social, environmental and economic effects of the preferred policies (summary of the information in the matrices)
- How social, environmental and economic problems were considered in developing the policies and proposals
- Proposed mitigation measures (summary of the information in the matrices)
- Uncertainties and risks (summary of the information in the matrices relating to limitations in the assessment arising out of lack of information)

### **7. Implementation**

- Links to other tiers of plans and programmes and the project level (EIA, design guidance etc.)
- Proposals for monitoring

## **3.1. Strategic Aims for the Draft SPD**

The following aims have been proposed for the draft Royston Town Centre Strategy SPD<sup>8</sup>. These are:

1. To preserve and enhance the special character of Royston Town Centre.
2. To promote the vitality and viability of Royston Town Centre through planning for its growth and sustainable development.
3. To promote a town centre that is accessible to all.

4. To develop the town centre's role as the focus for civic and social life and as a place which is pleasant, safe and inviting to visit, live and shop in.

Supporting these aims will be a number of monitorable spatial objectives and themes to be specified within the draft Royston Town Centre Strategy SPD.

## 3.2. Strategic Options for the Draft SPD

In developing the SPD, this SA/SEA considers three broad strategic options to deliver these aims. Each of these options for the overall strategic focus of the SPD will be appraised in stage B2. These are:

- (a) Do not produce a SPD, but rely on the current policy (this is the 'business as usual option')
- (b) Produce an SPD based on minimal change to the town centre with some public realm enhancement and development of the civic centre site.
- (c) Produce a SPD based on preserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the town centre with a moderate increase in retail provision and social facilities. (This would include enhancements of certain areas within the town centre and other development opportunities as identified through the public workshops)

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<sup>8</sup> They will be appraised using the SA Framework, in Stage B2 of the process

# 4. Context Review

*Stage A1. Identify and review other relevant plans, programmes and policies, and sustainable development objectives that will affect or influence the SPD.*

## 4.1. Purpose of the Context Review

The Context review is Stage A1 of the process outlined in the ODPM's Guidance on sustainability appraisal. The Guidance explains that<sup>9</sup>:

*Identifying relationships with relevant policies, plans, programmes, and sustainability objectives will help:*

- *to identify any external social, environmental or economic objectives that should be taken into account in the SA of the plan;*
- *to identify other external factors, including sustainability issues that might influence the preparation of the plan; and*
- *to determine whether other policies, plans and programmes might give rise to cumulative effects when combined with the plan that is subject to the SA.*

The Context review meets the requirements of the SEA Directive to provide an outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes<sup>10</sup>

## 4.2. Review of Plans Programmes and Policies relevant to North Hertfordshire

The Context Review draws on the work already undertaken for the appraisal of the initial development plan documents. The Scoping Report for that appraisal identified policies, plans and programmes relevant to the initial development plan documents. The list of documents previously reviewed, have been scoped, and those documents, which are relevant to this SPD are listed below. Any new documents that also needed appraising are listed below. These documents are shown in italics. The full review is included in Appendix 2.

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<sup>9</sup> Appendix 5

<sup>10</sup> Directive Annex 1 a

Plan, Programme or Policy
<b>National</b>
<i>ODPM Circular 05/2005 Planning Obligations</i>
UK Sustainable Development Strategy 2005
Sustainable communities: building for the future (2003)
<i>PPS3 Housing (2006)</i>
PPG4: Industrial, Commercial Development and Small Firms (2001)
PPG13: Transport (2001)
PPG15: Planning and the Historic Environment (2001)
PPG16: Archaeology and Planning (2001)
PPG17: Planning for Sport, Open Space and Recreation (1991)
PPS25 Development and Flood Risk (2006)
PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development (2005)
PPS6: Planning for Town Centres (2005)
<i>ODPM Planning for Town Centres - Implementation Tools (2005)</i>
PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas ( 2004)
<i>PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (2005)</i>
<i>PPS10: Planning and Sustainable Waste Management (2005)</i>
PPS12: Local Development Frameworks, ( 2004)
PPS22: Renewable Energy (2004)
<i>Draft Supplement to PPS1 - Planning and Climate Change (2006)</i>
<i>Planning for a Sustainable Future - White Paper (2007)</i>
<b>Regional</b>
East of England Plan: Draft revision to the RSS for the East of England (Dec 2004) and associated EIP Panel Report (June 2006)
East of England Plan: Sustainability Appraisal Report (November 2004)
Sustainable futures: The Integrated Regional Strategy for East of England (Feb 2005)
A Sustainable Development Framework for the East of England (Oct 2001)
<b>County</b>
Hertfordshire Structure Plan 1991-2011
Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan 2006/7-2010-2011
SEA of Local Transport Plan 2006/7- 2010-2011
A 50 Year Vision for the Wildlife and Natural Habitats of Hertfordshire: BAP (1998)
The Hertfordshire Environmental Strategy (June 2001)
An Economic Development Strategy for Hertfordshire 2000-2005 (Oct 2000)
Hertfordshire Town Renaissance Campaign
Hertfordshire Waste Strategy
Hertfordshire Waste Local Plan 1995-2005 (1999)
Hertfordshire Sustainability Guide
Enjoy! A cultural strategy for Hertfordshire
Rural Hertfordshire – an agenda for action 2001 – 2005 Hertfordshire Rural Forum
Rural Innovation Strategy – Hertfordshire Forum (Apr 2003)
Hertfordshire Renewable Energy Study (Jan 2005)

<b>Local (District wide and sub-District)</b>
North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No.2 with Alterations
North Hertfordshire District Council Corporate Plan (2005)
North Hertfordshire Housing Strategy 2004-2007
<i>North Hertfordshire Housing Needs Study (2002)</i>
Home Energy Conservation Act (H.E.C.A) Progress Report
Rural Strategy for North Hertfordshire 2005 – 2010 (March 2005)
Biodiversity Action Plan
Pavilions, Playing Fields and Sports Pitches Strategy
Play Area and Outdoor Youth Provision Strategy 2004-2010
Community Strategy for North Hertfordshire
Community Safety Strategy
Social Inclusion Strategy
Health Improvement and Modernisation Programme
Northern Hertfordshire Area Transport Plan
North Hertfordshire District Council Car Parking Strategy
<i>North Hertfordshire Cycling Strategy (1999)</i>
<i>North Hertfordshire Towns Cycle Route Network (2000)</i>
<i>Royston Conservation Area Review (March 2007)</i>
<i>Hitchin Town Centre Strategy (Final Version Nov 2004)</i>
<i>Baldock Town Centre Strategy (Final Version Jan 2006)</i>
<i>NHDC Planning Obligations SPD (consultation Draft April 2006)</i>
<i>NHDC Vehicle Parking Provision at New Development SPD (March 2006)</i>
<i>Letchworth Garden City Town Centre Strategy (January 2007)</i>
<i>Draft North Hertfordshire Urban Design Assessment</i>

# 5. Sustainability Issues

*Stage A3. Identify key sustainability issues and problems for the SA to address.*

## 5.1. Purpose of identifying sustainability issues

The Guidance comments that the identification of sustainability issues (including environmental problems as required by the SEA Directive) is an opportunity to define key issues for the SPD<sup>11</sup> and develop sustainable plan objectives and options.

The identification of sustainability issues also provides useful information for the sustainability appraisal process itself. It will inform stage B of the process (not covered in this report) where options and policies will be tested against the appraisal objectives. For example when testing options for development in the town centre, transport available to those without a car is a sustainability problem will inform the judgements made in the testing process and influence the choice of options.

The identification of sustainability issues meets the requirements of the SEA Directive to identify any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance<sup>12</sup>.

## 5.2. Key Sustainability Issues for North Hertfordshire

A list of issues was developed for the appraisal of the initial development plan documents. Most of the key sustainability issues apply to the whole district and so are the same for this SPD. However, some are altered slightly to make them more specific to Royston, and some extra ones have been added as a result of issues brought up at the public workshops. This list will therefore be used as the basis for the appraisal of this SPD. It is shown in Appendix 1.

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<sup>11</sup> Supplementary Planning Document

<sup>12</sup> Annex 1(d)

# 6. Sustainability Appraisal Objectives

*Stage A4 Develop the SA framework, consisting of the sustainability objectives, indicators and targets*

## 6.1. Purpose of the SA Objectives

Sustainability Appraisal is an objectives-led process. This means that the potential impacts of a plan are tested against a series of objectives for sustainable development (e.g. an objective *to use resources efficiently*).

Along with their associated indicators and any targets (which are shown in the baseline review in Appendix 3), the objectives form the Appraisal Framework. The Guidance notes that particularly relevant sources for SA objectives include *the UK Sustainable Development Strategy, the Regional Sustainable Development Frameworks, and at the local level Community Strategies or Plans. Baseline information collected and sustainability issues (and environmental problems as required by the SEA Directive) identified at earlier stages in the SA can also be especially useful in identifying objectives and indicators*<sup>13</sup>.

The Guidance also comments that *planning authorities may also choose to include more detailed decision making criteria and related indicators in their SA Framework. Detailed decision making criteria can help to ensure that all the key issues to be considered in the SA are incorporated in the SA Framework. An example of a more detailed decision making criterion for resource efficiency could be reduce water use.*

It should be noted that the SA objectives are distinct from the LDF objectives though they may in some cases overlap with them. This is because the SA objectives provide a neutral set of principles, which can be modified according to the topic covered or the area in question, against which significant environmental and sustainability effects can be appraised. LDF objectives on the other hand set out the kind of outcomes that the plan seeks to achieve, such as increasing housing provision/affordability, provision of retailing to meet growing needs etc. which require an accompanying set of monitoring indicators to monitor the progress of the plan against its key objectives, which may have a variety of positive and/or negative environmental and other sustainability impacts. For this reason it is important that LDF objectives and sustainability objectives are sufficiently different to avoid the risk of appraising sustainability indicators against themselves, a process that can only have a meaningless positive outcome. Monitoring against sustainability objectives has a different purpose, to see the impact of an approach both positive and negative, in order to determine if that planning approach needs to be varied.

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<sup>13</sup> Appendix 9

## 6.2. Objectives for appraising the SPD

An objectives framework was developed for the appraisal of initial development plan documents, and when undertaking the SA/SEA of the Planning Obligations SPD, it was decided that there was one additional sub-objective relevant to that SPD. That is:

- Protect or improve the quality of the public realm in towns

This sub-objective is equally important for this SPD. The revised framework is shown in the table below. The objectives which address the issues which are required to be covered by the SEA Directive<sup>14</sup> are shown underlined.

<b>SA Objective</b> <i>(those relevant to the SEA Directive are shown underlined)</i>	<b>SA Sub Objective:</b> <i>will the policy or proposal help to...</i>
<b>ECONOMIC ACTIVITY</b>	
1 Achieve sustainable levels of prosperity and economic growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maintain a diversified economy, with increased resilience to external shocks?</li> <li>• encourage new business to start-up and thrive in the District?</li> <li>• support and encourage the rural economy and diversification?</li> <li>• support and promote sustainable tourism in towns and rural areas?</li> <li>• improve the quality of local jobs available to people in the District?</li> <li>• increase the skills base?</li> <li>• make the cost of housing more affordable to those employed in the District?</li> </ul>
<b>LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS</b>	
<u>2(a) Minimise the development of greenfield land and other land with high environmental and amenity value?</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• promote the use of brownfield sites and if brownfield sites are not available, land of low environmental and amenity value?</li> <li>• maximise reuse of vacant buildings and derelict land?</li> <li>• minimise the loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land?</li> <li>• reduce quantity of unremediated contaminated land?</li> </ul>
<u>2(b) Provide access to green spaces</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide/improve access for all residents of the District to green spaces?</li> <li>• provide opportunities for people to come into contact with and appreciate wildlife and wild places?</li> <li>• maintain/improve the public right of way network?</li> </ul>

<sup>14</sup> listed in Annex 1(f)

<p><u>2 (c) Deliver more sustainable location patterns and reduce the use of motor vehicles</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• locate development so as to reduce the need to travel?</li> <li>• reduce car reliance, encourage walking, cycle, bus, and train use?</li> <li>• reduce road freight movements?</li> <li>• avoid exacerbating local traffic congestion?</li> <li>• provide affordable, accessible public transport in towns and in rural areas?</li> </ul>
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION</b>	
<p><u>3(a) Protect and enhance biodiversity</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• protect habitats and species, especially those designated as being of importance, and provide opportunities for creation of new habitats?</li> <li>• support and maintain extent of wetland habitat and river habitats?</li> </ul>
<p><u>3(b) Protect and enhance landscapes</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• protect and enhance landscapes, especially those of historic, recreational or amenity value, and within the Chilterns AONB?</li> </ul>
<p><u>3(c) Conserve and where appropriate, enhance the historic environment</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• conserve and enhance the historic built character of the District's town's and villages?</li> <li>• protect sites of archaeological and historic importance, whether designated or not?</li> </ul>
<p><u>3(d) Reduce pollution from any source</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improve the water quality of rivers and groundwater supplies?</li> <li>• achieve good air quality?</li> <li>• reduce ambient noise, especially from traffic?</li> <li>• reduce light pollution in the District?</li> <li>• protect soil quality?</li> </ul>
<b>CLIMATE CHANGE</b>	
<p><u>4(a) Reduce greenhouse gas emissions</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• minimise energy consumption by transport and in buildings?</li> <li>• increase proportion of energy generated by renewable sources?</li> <li>• encourage use of local suppliers and the consumption of local produce?</li> </ul>
<p><u>4(b) Improve the District's ability to adapt to climate change</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reduce vulnerability to climate change, exploit any benefits?</li> <li>• avoid development in areas at risk from flooding?</li> </ul>
<b>A JUST SOCIETY</b>	
<p>5(a) Share benefits of prosperity fairly</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reduce disparities in income levels?</li> <li>• contribute to regeneration of deprived areas (estates in Letchworth and Hitchin)?</li> <li>• provide employment and other opportunities for unemployed, especially long term unemployed and the disabled?</li> <li>• encourage entrepreneurial activity in deprived areas?</li> </ul>

5(b) Provide access to services and facilities for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide access to services and facilities without need to use a car?</li> <li>• retain rural services, especially shops, post offices, schools, health centres and bus services?</li> <li>• recognise the needs of specific groups such as minority ethnic groups, the young, the elderly and the disabled?</li> </ul>
5(c) Promote community cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• support development of voluntary sector?</li> <li>• encourage development of community run business?</li> <li>• encourage people's feelings of belonging, for example by providing community meeting places?</li> <li>• recognise and value cultural and ethnic diversity?</li> </ul>
5(d) Increase access to decent and affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• help improve the quality of the housing stock and reduce the number of unfit homes?</li> <li>• increase access to affordable housing, particularly for the young, the disabled and key workers?</li> </ul>
5(e) Reduce crime rates and fear of crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• encourage crime reduction, particularly through the appropriate design of new development?</li> <li>• help reduce the fear of crime?</li> </ul>
<u>5(f) Improve conditions and services that engender good health and reduce health inequalities</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• help promote healthy lifestyles?</li> <li>• improve access to health services by means other than private cars?</li> <li>• reduce ambient noise near residential and amenity areas?</li> <li>• reduce road accidents?</li> <li>• reduce accidents and damage from fires?</li> </ul>
5(g) Increase participation in education and life-long learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• improve access to skills learning by young people?</li> <li>• improve access to skills learning by adults?</li> </ul>
5(h) Maintain and improve culture, leisure and recreational activities that are available to all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increase access to culture, leisure and recreational activities?</li> </ul>
<b>RESOURCE USE AND WASTE</b>	
<u>6(a) Use natural resources efficiently; reuse, use recycled where possible</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• minimise the demand for raw materials?</li> <li>• encourage sustainable design, use of sustainable building materials and minimise wastage caused by construction methods?</li> <li>• limit water consumption to levels supportable by natural process and storage systems?</li> <li>• protect groundwater resources?</li> <li>• promote sustainable drainage systems?</li> <li>• reduce minerals extracted and imported?</li> </ul>
<u>6(b) Reduce waste</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reduce, reuse or recycle waste generated?</li> </ul>

<b>TOWN CENTRES</b>	
7 Promote sustainable urban living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• encourage wider range of shops and services in town centres?</li> <li>• encourage more people to live in town centres?</li> <li>• encourage mixed use developments in town centres?</li> <li>• improve transport connections in, and to, town centres?</li> <li>• encourage synergy in land uses, which supports the continued and enhanced viability of a wide range of shops and services?</li> <li>• protect or improve the quality of the public realm in towns?</li> </ul>

# 7. Baseline review

Stage A2. Collect relevant social, environmental and economic baseline information and produce a characterisation of North Hertfordshire

## 7.1. Purpose of baseline review

As its name implies the baseline review describes the current social, economic and environmental conditions in the District. The Guidance notes that *baseline information provides the basis for predicting and monitoring effects and helps to identify sustainability problems and alternative ways of dealing with them.*

Collecting baseline information therefore contributes to the effectiveness of the appraisal. The aim is to collect information relating to each of the sustainability objectives. However, in reality there will be gaps in data availability. The Guidance notes that *The SA team should consider whether improvements are needed to current information collection to fill existing gaps. Ways of improving the availability of information can be included in proposals for monitoring the implementation of the plan<sup>15</sup>.*

The baseline review meets the requirements of the SEA Directive to provide information on *the environmental characteristics of the area likely to be affected<sup>16</sup>.*

A baseline review was undertaken for the appraisal of the Initial Development Plan Documents. Three additional indicators relevant to the SPD have been identified. These are:

- Footfall of shoppers in the Town Centre.
- The proportion of residents within Royston doing their main weekly shop in Royston Town Centre
- Quality of the public realm in the town centre (under investigation)

The Baseline data is included in Appendix 3.

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<sup>15</sup> Appendix 6

<sup>16</sup> Annex1 (c)

## 8. Appendix 1 Key Sustainability Issues

SA Objective <sup>17</sup>	Issues	Source
<b>ECONOMIC ACTIVITY</b>		
1 Achieve sustainable levels of prosperity and economic growth	Difficulties in competing with large urban centres for provision of employment, shopping and other facilities	Discussion with Officer Steering Group
	Promotion of tourism. Visitors can be important, but the District is not seen as a prime tourist location.	Discussion with Officer Steering Group
	Need to provide more high quality employment in the District. This will help reduce the disparity between local income and that of commuters, and to reduce the environmental impacts of commuting. One cause of this is the high cost of housing; employers don't see the District as a location of choice.	Herts Rural Innovation Strategy (p30) North Herts Learning Forum Action Plan LSC Action Plan
	Recruitment of skilled workers: within rural Hertfordshire 15% of employers report difficulty in recruiting the skills they need. This compares with a 10% average for Hertfordshire and as little as 2% in the south of the County. Equally 19% of Hertfordshire firms report that a lack of skilled labour is a limiting factor in increasing output.	NHDC Corporate Plan (p6) Discussion with Officer Steering Group
	Competition more locally from Tesco and poor variety of retail shops within the town centre that do not meet people's everyday needs, also encourages people to shop elsewhere.	Issues identified in workshops with public
	Parking charges are considered a reason why people don't come into the town centre to shop – which has an impact on local retailers.	Issues identified in workshops with public
	Difficult to attract new shops due to lack of footfall within the town centre and limited size of units given historic nature of buildings.	Issues identified in workshops with public
	Town centre is dominated by charity shops, banks and building societies with a few specialist shops.	Issues identified in workshops with public

<sup>17</sup> Those relevant to the SEA Directive are shown underlined

SA Objective <sup>17</sup>	Issues	Source
	Strengths of the town centre need to be identified in terms promoting inward investment and tourism	Issues identified in workshops with public
	Different types of market needs promotion along with improved facilities.	Issues identified in workshops with public
<b>LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS</b>		
<u>2(a) Minimise the development of greenfield land and other land with high environmental and amenity value</u>	The need to provide additional housing for local needs and to meet additional regional requirements will require the use of greenfield sites and put significant pressure on the environment and quality of life in the District. Although no strategic review of greenbelt is proposed for around Royston (in the regional spatial strategy the more capacity that can be found within the town including the town centre will reduce pressure for greenfield development throughout the district.	NHDC corporate Plan (p6) Key issue 'We will protect the environment by vigorously challenging airport and greenfield housing development' Draft East of England Regional Spatial Strategy and associated Panel Report
<u>2(b) Provide access to green spaces</u>	Priory Gardens is valued as an important open space contributing to the layout of the town centre and is considered as environmental asset to the town centre.	Issues identified in workshops with public
<u>2 (c) deliver more sustainable location patterns and reduce the use of motor vehicles</u>	Population and mobility factors have changed the function of villages and small towns from employment service centres increasingly towards dormitory/residential functions reducing their social and physical diversity. An increasing proportion of retail expenditure is going out of the town.	Herts Rural Innovation Strategy (p31) Discussion with Officer Steering Group NLP Retail and Town Centre Study
	The complex settlement pattern and distribution of shopping and employment facilities means that it is sometimes difficult to maintain commercially viable passenger transport for journeys other than to London.	Herts Rural Innovation Strategy (p31) Hertfordshire Local Transport Plan
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION</b>		
<u>3(c) Conserve and where appropriate, enhance the historic environment</u>	Any new development/regeneration should enhance and complement the historic character of the town and be of good quality design.	Issues identified in workshops with public
<u>3(d) Reduce pollution from any source</u>	Quality of surface and ground water is threatened by the water supply needs and drainage from future developments. Adequate supply for future developments is also an issue: see 6a below.	Herts Environmental Forum Strategy Discussion with Officer Steering Group

SA Objective <sup>17</sup>	Issues	Source
<b>CLIMATE CHANGE</b>		
4(a) <u>Reduce greenhouse gas emissions</u>	Transport use is a significant contributor to global warming. Journey lengths are above the county average for work and leisure journeys in North Hertfordshire//Stevenage, and there is a high car use for the school run.	North Herts Area Transport Plan (NHATP) Table 7 Issues and problems identified through consultation. Draft Letchworth and Baldock Urban Transport Plan. NHDC Rural Strategy (Annex 4 – Priority 7 – transport) HCC Local Transport Plan
	Improvements required to public transport facilities and bus services.	Issues identified in workshops with public
	Domestic and commercial energy use is also a significant contributor to global warming.	Discussion with Officer Steering Group
<b>A JUST SOCIETY</b>		
5(a) Share access to services and benefits of prosperity fairly	Whilst the District is relatively prosperous there are pockets of income and/ or multiple deprivation in relation to national standards.	NHDC Corporate Plan (p4) Anti-Poverty Strategy 1998, summarised in Appendix to NHDC Social Inclusion Strategy. Herts Rural Innovation Strategy (p31) Community Legal Service Strategy 2003
5(b) Provide access to services and facilities for all	The number of households in the district with an elderly person in it is higher than the national average at 34%. There is a lack of facilities for young people in the town.	Herts Rural Innovation Strategy (p31) Older Peoples Strategy
5(d). Increase access to decent and affordable housing	There is a need to improve supply of high-quality affordable housing. The need for affordable housing has been exacerbated by insufficient development of affordable units over the last decade. Coupled with significant inflation in the housing market the gap has widened between the 'haves' and 'have-nots'. Specific issues on affordable housing include key worker housing, housing for young people and the disabled.	NHDC Corporate Plan (p6)  Housing Strategy 2004 Affordable housing programme

SA Objective <sup>17</sup>	Issues	Source
		<p>Draft East of England Regional Spatial Strategy and associated Panel Report</p> <p>ODPM Sustainable Communities Plan (2003)</p>
5(e) Reduce crime rates and fear of crime	<p>NHDC is generally very safe, but fear of crime is an issue in the District. The crime survey showed that areas of concern about crime and disorder are spread throughout the District. A particular issue is street crime, theft from cars and antisocial behaviour in the town centre.</p>	<p>NHDC Corporate Plan (p7)  North Herts CDRP Strategy 2005-08  Crime Audit 2004  Fear of Crime Survey 2004  Discussion with Officer Steering Group</p>
	<p>Improved lighting and CCTV coverage required in certain parts of the town centre to improve safety.</p>	<p>Issues identified in workshops with public</p>
5(f) Improve conditions and services that engender good health and reduce health inequalities	<p>Generally speaking across all age groups the population of North Hertfordshire and Stevenage enjoys good health compared with national averages. This however masks some areas at ward or sub-ward level of significant deprivation and poorer health status. The incidence of age-related poor health, including fuel poverty (hypothermia related) and senility are higher in North Hertfordshire.</p>	<p>Health Improvement and Modernisation Programme, North Herts and Stevenage PCT 2005 (p6)  Director of Public Health Report 2005  Discussion with Officer Steering Group.</p>
	<p>Noise from air and road transport has a significant effect on quality of life in the District. Some proposed developments may have significant additional impacts.</p>	<p>Discussion with Officer Steering Group</p>
	<p>There are also important local issues regarding the need to integrate and co-ordinate transport services and arrangements to improve access to health facilities.</p>	<p>Health Improvement and Modernisation Programme, North Herts and Stevenage PCT. (p35)  Health Scrutiny report</p>

SA Objective <sup>17</sup>	Issues	Source
	Cycling considered dangerous in the town centre given the narrow streets and high volumes of traffic.	Issues identified in workshops with public
	Pedestrian access in terms of safety and accessibility considered an issue in terms of links within and into the town centre at certain crossing points i.e. along Melbourn Road and the A10 and the narrow pavements along certain shopping streets such as Kneesworth Street. Opportunity to create pedestrian friendly streets.	Issues identified in workshops with public
5(h) Maintain and improve culture, leisure and recreational activities that are available to all	Royston Town Centre is the main cultural area for the town.	Discussion with Officer Steering Group
<b>RESOURCE USE AND WASTE</b>		
6 (a). Use natural resources efficiently; reuse, use recycled where possible	Hertfordshire has the highest domestic water use in the country. The proposed new developments will put some pressure on water supply infrastructure, and may require water to be piped in from outside the District, further abstraction with associated environmental impacts and/or water conservation measures in new developments	Draft East of England Regional Spatial Strategy and associated Panel Report
	The most recent figures available (1997) show that Hertfordshire was a net importer of sand and gravel with consumption exceeding sales by 0.356mt.	Herts Minerals Local Plan Second Deposit Draft (para 1.4.3)
6(b) Reduce waste	Need to reduce waste and increase recycling rates, particularly because waste sites within the County will be full by 2008.	NHDC Corporate Plan (p6) Herts Waste Strategy (p5) Discussion with Officer Steering Group
<b>TOWN CENTRES</b>		
7, Promote sustainable urban living	Main footfall areas are along main shopping streets, however linkages need to be strengthened along other streets towards the Civic Centre site, Somerfield and northwards.	Issues identified in workshops with public
	Opportunity to encourage more footfall through redevelopment of certain sites such as Angel Pavement for mixed use and the Civic Centre Site for civic, conference, health and possible residential uses.	Issues identified in workshops with public

SA Objective <sup>17</sup>	Issues	Source
	Links between station and town centre need to be improved.	Issues identified in workshops with public
	Better and more appropriate use and management of car parking within the town centre needs to be addressed.	Issues identified in workshops with public