Sustainability Appraisal Commentary (May 2006) for:
Rotherham Local Development Framework - Core Strategy Options

Published to accompany Informal Public Consultation (Regulation 25 ‘front-loading’) on
Core Strategy Options (May – June 2006)

Introduction

The following summarises the results of the Sustainability Appraisal undertaken as part of the
preparation of the emerging Core Strategy Options for the Rotherham Local Development
Framework (LDF). It is published to accompany, and should be read to inform consideration of,
the documents produced for the May - June 2006 Rotherham LDF Core Strategy Options
Consultation (Regulation 25 ‘front-loading’).

Background

Both the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the EU Strategic Environmental
Assessment Directive 2001/42/EC require that the preparation of Local Development
Frameworks be informed by Sustainability Appraisal.

The purpose of Sustainability Appraisal is to promote sustainable development through the
integration of social, environmental and economic considerations into the preparation of the
Local Development Framework.

The Borough Council’s methodology for undertaking this work is set out in the ‘General Scoping
Report’ (which can be viewed at www.rotherham.gov.uk > Your Home > Planning > Forward
Planning > Sustainability Appraisal). This has been updated to reflect comments received
during its formal 5-week consultation period ending January 13th 2006.

The LDF Core Strategy will set out the spatial vision, spatial objectives, policies and a
monitoring and implementation framework for the Borough.

Working to meet the requirements of the ‘Local Development Regulations’¹, the Borough
Council has commenced preparation of its LDF Core Strategy and has reached the stage of
informal (Regulation 25 ‘front-loading’ consultation) on its emerging Options.

Government Guidance² on Sustainability Appraisal for Local Development Frameworks requires
that this stage be accompanied by a commentary documenting how Sustainability Appraisal has
informed development of the Options. (There is no formal requirement for a full Sustainability
Appraisal Report at this stage – this will be published alongside the Core Strategy Preferred
Option later in 2006).

Further copies of this commentary can be found on the Council’s website (see above address).

Previous Sustainability Appraisal of the Rotherham LDF Core Strategy

In Rotherham, the development of the Core Strategy has been informed by Core Strategy
Objectives based upon sustainable development principles. These Objectives are organised

¹ Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004

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under 4 broad ‘Sustainability Aims\textsuperscript{3}': summarised as “environmental”, “economic”, “natural resources management” and “social”.

Initial Sustainability Appraisal of the Core Strategy’s Objectives was undertaken in December 2005. The results of that Appraisal are available on the Borough Council’s website\textsuperscript{4} and were checked following issue of the final version of the Sustainability Appraisal’s Scoping Report. However, no significant changes were required.

The Core Strategy Objectives, including its Sustainability Appraisal, subsequently helped inform the identification of Options (or different scenarios) for the Core Strategy: ‘Pro-Market Option A’, ‘Needs and Opportunities Option B’, ‘Pro-Environment Option C’ and ‘Unitary Development Plan Baseline Option’\textsuperscript{5}.

\textbf{Appraisal Methodology}

Using the Sustainability Appraisal Framework’s ‘Appraisal Matrix AM2’ (see Appendix C4 of Scoping Report) each Core Strategy Option, as well as the existing Unitary Development Plan baseline, have been assessed against the 22 Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Objectives. Using, as necessary, the Sustainability Appraisal Framework’s ‘Decision Guiding Questions’, each interaction between Core Strategy Option and Sustainability Appraisal Objective was considered for its “direction of travel” towards or from sustainable development according to the following scale of effects:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Major Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Minor Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-1</td>
<td>Minor Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-2</td>
<td>Major Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each interaction was summarised, within the Appraisal Matrix, according to effects, main spatial effects and proposed mitigation (or enhancement) opportunities. An attempt to identify, short term (0-4 years), medium term (5-9 years) and long term (10+) effects was made. Assessment of cumulative effects was considered for long term effects only (as per the Scoping Report’s methodology). Importantly, completion of the matrix also required a comparison of the options and baseline for each SA Objective.

It should be stressed that it was the explanation of assessment commentary, and not the use of scoring and apparent quantification of effect, that has been used as the main tool in assessing relative sustainability. The use of scoring is not intended to imply scientific quantification of effect. As decisions were based upon individual “expert judgement” (which it is acknowledged can vary between person to person and upon assumptions), it is the explanatory text, and summaries of assessment, which are more important that the apparent scores. Further explanation of this issue is found within the Scoping Report’s ‘Guidance on Completing Appraisal’ (Appendix C5).

\textsuperscript{3} CS Objectives 1.1-1.7 (Protecting and enhancing the natural and built environment); 2.1-2.12 (Building a prosperous, diverse and enduring economy); 3.1-3.6 (The prudent management of natural resources and minimising climate change (using science wisely)); 4.1-4.5 (Creating cohesive and inclusive communities (and promoting effective governance)).

\textsuperscript{4} which can be viewed at \url{www.rotherham.gov.uk} > Your Home > Planning > Forward Planning > Sustainability Appraisal

\textsuperscript{5} For more information see the Borough Council's Forward Planning web page: \url{www.rotherham.gov.uk} > Your Home > Planning > Forward Planning.
This assessment work was primarily undertaken during March and April 2006 by three members of the Borough Council’s Forward Planning Section working independently of one another. The results from each members’ appraisal were drawn together to complete the Scoping Report’s Appraisal Matrix (AM) 2 as shown in Appendix 2.

Results

Appendix 2 reproduces in full the completed Appraisal Matrix for the Core Strategy’s Options.

Appendix 1 summarises the key results from the completed Appraisal Matrix. It shows how each Option, relative to one another, fairs against each of the Sustainability Appraisal’s 22 Objectives.

For simplicity, Appendix 1 only shows the results of the long term assessment of effects (given that the Scoping Report’s methodology concentrates on such assessment at this stage of Development Plan Document preparation). However, it should be noted that the Appendix’s summary of the ‘comparison of options’ is based upon all factors considered in Appendix 2, not just long-term effects.

Discussion

Both Appendices 1 and 2 illustrate that the three Core Strategy Options (‘Pro-Market’, ‘Needs and Opportunities’, Pro-Environment’) and the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) baseline, contribute to achievement of Sustainable Development to varying degrees and effect depending upon which Sustainability Appraisal Objective is considered.

Noting the important proviso mentioned above, regarding the limitations associated with reliance upon simplistic summation of long term effects scores, the following comments for each Option can be made:

- **UDP Baseline**
  - A cumulative score of 0, identifies an overall neutral long term impact.
  - Mixed long-term performance noted. UDP policy largely over-taken by more recent changes in Policy affecting sustainability scores. With updating, certain aspects of UDP baseline could be developed to beneficial sustainability effects, either in isolation or in combination with aspects of other Options, particularly in the longer term.

- **Pro-Market Option A**
  - A cumulative score of –24, identifies a significant negative long term impact.
  - Significant number of ‘major negative (-2)’ scores contributes to this impact. Certain aspects of this Option perform well and should be considered further.

- **Needs & Opportunities Option B**
  - A cumulative score of 26, identifies a significant positive long term impact.
  - No negative long term scores.

- **Pro-Environment Option C**
  - A cumulative score of 22, identifies a significant positive long term impact.
  - Marginally poorer long term performance than Option B, with identification of some long term negative impacts.

However, what is considered of more benefit than the above results, is the use of the Sustainability Appraisal to help identify a possible hybrid ‘Preferred Option’ for the Core Strategy, based upon the Appraisal’s qualitative assessment.
Appendix 1 highlights how the Appraisal Matrix can be used to recommend such a hybrid, based upon noting which Option, or combination of Options, meets each Sustainability Appraisal Objective in the most sustainable manner. [Note the Appraisal is not identifying a straight choice between, for example, ‘the Pro-Market’ as opposed to the Pro-Environment’ Option].

The Appraisal process undertaken has certain limitations which can potentially affect interpretation of the results obtained. Given the nature of the subject assessed, the Core Strategy concerns broad strategic policy choices, the detailed effects of which are difficult to identify at this stage of Development Plan Document preparation. Assessment is restricted by the limited resources that prevent detailed research, and the associated greater level of certainty, to support identification of specific potential effects of the Options against each of the 22 Sustainability Appraisal Objectives.

Furthermore, the Appraisal process has, through necessity, had to be undertaken by Planning Officers who are also responsible for the preparation of the Core Strategy itself. The role of the Consultation on the Appraisal’s results, as part of the wider Core Strategy Options consultation, is therefore considered important to encourage some external interrogation of the results obtained.

The Sustainability Appraisal process has also relied upon ‘expert judgement’. Based upon differing assumptions and opinions, it is acknowledged that the Appraisal’s outcome could vary between individuals. However, it is considered the Appraisal Matrix has been used to clearly explain the reasons for the results identified. The use of Planning Officers appraising the Options independently of one another helped to improve the rigour of the results identified.

Conclusion

This Sustainability Appraisal Commentary has documented how Sustainability Appraisal has informed development of the Options for the Rotherham Local Development Framework’s Core Strategy. [It is not a Sustainability Appraisal Report to identify how, for example, the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive have been met. This will be produced in the subsequent Report accompanying the Preferred Core Strategy Option.]

The Sustainability Appraisal undertaken has assisted the identification of a possible hybrid ‘Preferred Option’ (see Appendix 1 for summary). This Option is determined based upon selection of the most sustainable aspects of each of the ‘Pro-Market Option A’, ‘Needs and Opportunities Option B’, ‘Pro-Environment Option C’ scenarios, as well as the Unitary Development Plan ‘Baseline’. Selection depended upon the relative performance of each Option when assessed against each of the 22 Sustainability Appraisal Objectives.

Based upon this Appraisal, such a Preferred Option would largely be a combination of Options B and C. However, despite the overall poor performance of Option A (overall significant negative impact), some aspects of Option A nevertheless may have a role to play. Similarly, aspects of the existing UDP baseline could be developed as part of a Preferred Option.

The results of this Appraisal are recommended for further consideration, together with comments received from the Core Strategy’s Options Consultation, as part of the identification of a Preferred Option for the Core Strategy Development Plan Document.

It is considered that preparation of the Core Strategy so far has benefited from the accompanying and iterative Sustainability Appraisal process. The Core Strategy’s foundation
upon ‘sustainability objectives’, themselves organised under 4 broad ‘Sustainability Aims’, was subsequently appraised against the Sustainability Appraisal’s 22 Objectives (in December 2005). These Core Strategy Objectives have then been used to identify possible Core Strategy Options, and this Sustainability Appraisal Commentary has documented how, following a further process of appraisal (in Spring 2006), a possible sustainable ‘hybrid’ Core Strategy Option can be identified. Consideration of how the Core Strategy Development Plan Document can contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development has thus been an integral part of its preparation to date.
Appendix 1

Summary of Appraisal Matrix for Core Strategy Options
Key Results and Progress towards identification of Hybrid Option
## Sustainability Appraisal Objective (summary)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Long Term Assessment of Effects</th>
<th>Summary Comparison of Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to identify which option or combination of options meet Sustainability Appraisal Objective the best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>see completed Matrix (Appendix 2) for Full Commentary.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- see Appendix 2 for wording of objectives in full

### Unitary Development Plan Baseline vs Pro-Market Option (A) Needs and Opportunities vs Pro-Environment Option (C)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Baseline</th>
<th>Option (A)</th>
<th>Option (B)</th>
<th>Option (C)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'employment opportunities'</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'economic growth'</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'transport'</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'education and skills'</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'creativity, innovation, sound science'</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'awareness / encouragement of sustainability'</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'health'</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'culture and recreation'</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'town/ district centre function and vibrancy'</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Summary Comparison of Options

- **Option B** most beneficial and realistic. Option A could deliver some competitive targeted opportunities but is unlikely to maximise local accessibility. Option C aims to address accessibility issues by safeguarding most local opportunities but this may not be realistic.

- **No one Option** particularly favoured above the other options. **Hybrid** of Options suggested.

- **Option B** would appear to be most realistic.

- **Option B** most likely to achieve Objective.

- **Elements of all Options** have potential role to play. UDP baseline has encouraged movement away from declining traditional industries. Option A focussing on less risky innovation (such as the Waverley Advanced Manufacturing Park and the growth of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)). Option B would seek to consolidate clusters with a portfolio of land responsive to modern requirements. Option C is likely to seek to promote environmental industries in particular. **Option B is supported by elements of Option A and C**.

- **Option B and Option C** likely to meet the Sustainability Appraisal Objective the best. However, Option C may have a longer term detrimental effect. As such, **Option B** considered most realistic Option.

- **Option B would represent compromise between linking resource limitations to health risks (which may not be publicly acceptable).**

- **Option B and Pro-Environment Option C** fair best with Option C most sustainable.

- Option B offers best prospects. Option A perpetuates disadvantages and weaknesses of existing UDP. Option C, however desirable, likely to be unrealistic. **Option B** likely to be more desirable over time. Option C wouldn't take long to ‘break down’ and Option A could see a gradual run down
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>'safety and crime’</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Limited contribution to Objective from Development Plan System. Assessment of Options is challenging. Option A least likely (although perhaps only marginally) to achieve Objective. UDP would need developing further and be best achieved in Option B and Option C. Arguably Option C’s focus upon a need for better quality and managed public realm would best help to discourage crime and deterioration in local amenity.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>‘biodiversity and geodiversity’</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>‘natural resource consumption / renewable energy’</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>‘pollution’</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>‘flooding and climate change’</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>‘waste’</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>‘integrated / efficient land use’</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>‘affordable housing’</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>‘landscape quality / historic assets’</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>‘community cohesion / involvement / pride’</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
public intervention. **Option C** could potentially have greatest impact.

Objective could be promoted to varying extents under each of the three Options. **Option B** is considered most likely to produce the right kind of living conditions and places to visit. Option A and Option C demonstrate both kinds of extreme which may not achieve ideal appeal. Some aspects of Option A could give Rotherham wider publicity and image boost.

Limited contribution to Objective from Development Plan System. **Option B and Option C** likely to produce most benefit. The former may be most realistic.
Appendix 2

Completed Appraisal Matrix (AM2) for Core Strategy Options