

## **South Hams Local Development Framework**

### **Dartmouth Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD), Ivybridge Site Allocations DPD, Kingsbridge Site Allocations DPD, Totnes Site Allocations DPD and the Rural Areas Site Allocations DPD**

### **The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004**

### **Environmental Statement**

#### **Introduction**

- 1 South Hams District Council adopted the following Local Development Framework Site Allocations Development Plan Documents for Dartmouth, Ivybridge, Kingsbridge, Totnes and Rural Areas on 10 February 2011.
- 2 This statement has been prepared in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (16) (3) and (4), which requires a statement to be produced on adoption of a plan or programme to detail:
  - How environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme;
  - How the Environmental Report has been taken into account;
  - How public consultation responses have been taken into account;
  - The reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in light of other reasonable alternatives dealt with;
  - The measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan or programme.

#### **Integrating Environmental Considerations into the Site Allocations DPDs**

- 3 Local authorities are required to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) during the preparation of Local Development Framework (LDF) documents, such as the Site Allocations Development Plan Documents (DPDs). This is to ensure that sustainable development is at the heart of decisions at every stage of plan-making and is an integral part of the process.
- 4 The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) accompanying each Site Allocations DPD has been prepared as part of an iterative process in line with national guidance. The commencement of the DPDs coincided with the

preparation of an update to the scope of the sustainability appraisal (January 2009) in consultation with key stakeholders. This looked at revising the sustainability appraisal objectives so they were more relevant to the site selection process.

- 5 These revised sustainability objectives were then used to develop the Sustainability Threshold Assessment (STA), which is a key element of the evidence base for the DPDs. STA uses the sustainability objectives to compare and contrast different site options and test all reasonable alternatives.
- 6 The draft STA methodology and findings were published alongside the options consultation (May 2009) and additional consultation (January 2010). The STA methodology and findings were further refined and published at the Publication stage alongside the SA report for each DPD. Therefore, site selection has been integrated with the SA / SEA through the STA process.
- 7 The key difference the SA has made to the process has been through the integration of the SA / SEA consideration of options / alternatives with the Council's site selection process, through the use of the SA / SEA Sustainability Threshold Assessment method.
- 8 Throughout the SA / SEA / STA of the Site Allocations DPDs, three key environmental bodies have been consulted – the Environment Agency, English Heritage and Natural England. These bodies were firstly consulted on the update to the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal (January 2009).
- 9 Habitats Regulation Assessments of the Site Allocations DPDs were carried out and the findings were agreed with Natural England in June 2010. These assessed the impact of the DPDs on European sites within or near the administrative boundary.

### **How the Environmental Report has been taken into Account**

- 10 The preparation of the Site Allocations DPDs considered site options in the STA, suggestions from the SA/SEA, consultation responses and other documents in the evidence base to propose sites for development.
- 11 Each SA report concluded that, generally, the DPD proposals were found to positively contribute towards the SA objectives for sustainable development in South Hams. Section 5, Appendix V and VI of each SA report set out the findings of the sustainability appraisal on the vision, objectives, development proposals and progression of SA recommendations. In each case a small number of recommendations were made to improve the sustainability of the DPD and where possible these were incorporated into the plan. These included clauses on strategic landscaping for sites in Ivybridge, Dartington and

Loddiswell. Reference to flood risk and sustainable flood management measures was added into the supporting text for Ermington and Harbertonford amongst others. An objective was added to the Dartmouth DPD to ensure development at Townstal does not undermine viability and role of the town centre. Therefore, the SA has had an influence on the development of the DPDs.

- 12 Paragraphs 2.6 to 2.16 of the SA report set out the compliance with the SEA Directive and Regulations and how it has informed the development of the Site Allocations DPDs.

### **How public consultation responses have been taken into account**

- 13 Section 3 of the SA report includes detail on the consultation process and how this has informed plan preparation. The Statements of Consultation (available on the Council's website) detail a summary of main issues raised through the representations including those on the STA. Consultation responses were grouped into the following areas: issues of process, issues about the general approach to development and suggested alternative approaches, site specific comments on each of the proposed sites, and alternative sites suggested.
- 14 All consultation responses have been considered in the development of the DPDs. They have shaped the sites proposed at publication, and all publication representations have been considered through the independent examination process. In their report the inspectors concluded that "SA has been carried out as a parallel process to the preparation of the DPDs and is satisfactory". Furthermore, when considering the evidence base for site selection which included the STA it was concluded that "All of this evidence formed a solid foundation for a thorough assessment of alternative sites and it demonstrates that the selection process followed by the Council has been robust. It also provides the justification for the sites that are allocated".

### **The reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with;**

- 15 All reasonable site alternatives and options were considered through the STA at the options stage. This work evolved through plan preparation and formed part of the evidence base for the DPDs. All elements of the evidence base were considered to determine which sites should be allocated. Therefore, through the STA, SA/SEA considerations were integrated into the Council's site selection process. The conclusions of the STA were presented in section 5 and Appendix IV of the SA reports. Each SA report concluded that, generally, the DPD proposals were found to positively contribute towards the SA objectives for sustainable development in South Hams. The Inspectors at the examination stated the evidence was a solid

foundation for a thorough assessment of alternatives (see paragraph 14 above).

- 16 It is considered that there are no reasonable alternatives to the adoption of the Site Allocations DPDs if much needed sites for housing, employment and community facilities are to be provided.

### **Monitoring of the Sustainability Appraisal and the Site Allocations DPDs**

- 17 The Local Development Framework is kept under continuous review through an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). In order for this to happen each adopted DPD contains a monitoring framework to report on its effectiveness. The targets and indicators in the monitoring framework will be reported in the AMR.
- 18 Each SA report includes a section on implementation and monitoring. Many of the suggested indicators in the SA report are reported in the AMR, including mix of housing completed by house size and house tenure, supply of affordable housing, and amount of land developed for employment by type. The SA report also considers the cumulative effects of each DPD in section 5.

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