

Bassetlaw District Council Local Development Framework

**Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development
Plan Document**

**Post-Submission and post-Hearings Schedule of Focused Changes
– Sustainability Appraisal (June 2011)**

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1. Introduction

Following the examination of the Bassetlaw District Council Core Strategy & Development Management Policies DPD, the Inspector recommended a number of 'essential' changes to the document to make it sound. The Council regards these changes as being 'focused' and has, therefore, decided that they should be subject to Sustainability Appraisal (SA).

To maintain consistency with the assessment made in the SA of the Publication Core Strategy, the changes suggested by the Inspector will be considered against the same Sustainability Appraisal Objectives (SAOs), decision-making criteria (Figure 1, below) and methodology. The subsequent sustainability issues arising from this assessment are set out below.

Figure 1: Sustainability Appraisal Objectives, Decision-Making Criteria and Indicators

| Objective | Decision making criteria | Indicators |
|---|--|--|
| 1. To ensure that the housing stock meets the housing needs of Bassetlaw | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it increase the range and affordability of housing for all social groups? Will it reduce homelessness? Will it reduce the number of unfit homes? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affordable housing (no. of units) House prices; housing affordability Homelessness Housing completions (type and size) Housing tenure LA stock declared non decent Sheltered accommodation |
| 2. To improve health and reduce health inequalities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it reduce health inequalities? Will it improve access to health services? Will it increase the opportunities for recreational physical activity? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Life expectancy at birth New/enhanced health facilities |
| 3. To provide better opportunities for recreation and for people to value and enjoy the Bassetlaw's cultural heritage | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it provide new open space? Will it improve the quality of existing open space? Will it help people to increase their participation in cultural activities? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open spaces managed to green flag award standard New and enhanced open space (ha) Number of Museum/heritage attractions |
| 4. To improve community safety, reduce crime and the fear of crime | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it provide safer communities? Will it reduced crime and the fear of crime? Will it contribute to a safe secure built environment? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crimes – by category and total |
| 5. To promote and support the development and growth of social capital across the District | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it improve access to, and resident's satisfaction with community facilities and services? Will it encourage engagement in community activities? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community centres Gains/losses of community facilities Leisure centres Libraries/mobile library stops |
| 6. To protect the natural environment and increase biodiversity levels across the District | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will it help protect and improve biodiversity and in particular avoid harm to protected species? Will it help protect and improve habitats? Will it increase, maintain and enhance sites designated for their nature conservation interest? Will it maintain and enhance woodland cover and management? Will it protect or contribute to the enhancement of the landscape character? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local/National nature reserves (ha/1000 population) Local wildlife sites (Biological SINCs) with management plans SSSIs (% in favourable condition) Woodland areas/new woodland (ha) |

| Objective | Decision making criteria | Indicators |
|---|---|--|
| 7. To protect and enhance the historic built environment and cultural heritage assets in Bassetlaw | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will it protect and enhance existing cultural assets? • Will it protect and enhance heritage assets and their setting? • Will it protect or contribute to the enhancement of the townscape character? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of Listed Buildings (all grades)/number and percentage at risk (all grades) • Number of Scheduled Monuments/number and percentage at risk • Number of Registered Parks and Gardens/number and percentage at risk • Number of conservation areas • Percentage of conservation areas with up-to-date character appraisals |
| 8. To protect and manage prudently the natural resources of the district including water, air quality, soils and minerals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will it improve water quality? • Will it protect and conserve water resources? • Will it improve air quality? • Will it lead to reduced consumption of raw materials? • Will it promote the use of sustainable design, materials and construction techniques? • Will it minimise the loss of soils to development? • Will it maintain and enhance soil quality? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greenfield land lost (ha) • Carbon dioxide emissions (tonnes per capita per annum) • Households in flood zones 2 & 3 • No. of employment developments and housing developed on PDL • Density of dwellings • Developments incorporating SUDS • Planning applications granted contrary to advice of EA • Biological/chemistry levels in rivers, canals and freshwater bodies • Production of primary and secondary/recycled aggregates |
| 9. To minimise waste and increase the re-use and recycling of waste materials | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will it reduce household waste? • Will it increase waste recovery and recycling? • Will it assist or facilitate compliance with the waste hierarchy (i.e. reduce first, then re-use, recover, recycle, landfill)? • Will it assist in maximising the use of recycled and secondary materials (including aggregates)? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total amount of waste produced (tonnes) • Amount of residual household waste produced • Capacity of new waste management facilities as alternatives to landfill • % household waste composted, land filled, recycled, used to recover energy |
| 10. To minimise energy usage and to develop the district's renewable energy resource, reducing dependency on non-renewable sources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will it improve energy efficiency of new buildings? • Will it support the generation and use of renewable energy? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy consumed from renewable sources (MW) • Energy use (gas/electricity) by end user • Renewable energy capacity installed by type (MW) |
| 11. To make efficient use of the existing transport infrastructure, help reduce the need to travel by car, improve accessibility to jobs and services for all and to ensure that all journeys are undertaken by the most sustainable mode available | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will it utilise and enhance existing transport infrastructure? • Will it help to develop a transport network that minimises the impact on the environment? • Will it reduce journeys undertaken by car by encouraging alternative modes of transport? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility to education sites, employment sites, health care, leisure centres, open space, shopping centres • Development of transport infrastructure that assists car use reduction • New major non-residential development with travel plans • People using car and non-car modes of travel to work |

| Objective | Decision making criteria | Indicators |
|---|---|--|
| 12. To create high quality employment opportunities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will it improve the diversity and quality of jobs? • Will it reduce unemployment? • Will it increase average income levels? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefit claimants • VAT business registration rate, registrations, de-registrations • Businesses per 1000 population • Employment rate • Number of jobs • New floor space • Shops, vacant shops • Unemployment rate |
| 13. To develop a strong culture of enterprise and innovation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will it increase levels of qualification? • Will it create jobs in high knowledge sectors? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 year olds achieving 5 or more GCSEs at Grade A* - C • 19 year olds qualified to NVQ level 2 or equivalent • 21 year olds qualified to NVQ level 3 or equivalent • Working age population qualifications |
| 14. To provide the physical conditions for a modern economic structure, including infrastructure to support the use of new technologies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will it provide land and buildings of a type required by businesses? • Will it improve the diversity of jobs available? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed business development floorspace • Land developed for employment • Employment land lost • Employment land allocated • Profile of employment by sector |

2. Sustainability Effects of Changes to the Core Strategy

2.1 Introduction to the Core Strategy

A small number of changes have been made to the opening section of the Core Strategy in order to explain the practicalities associated with use of the document and to give clarity to the role of the development boundaries that have been revised (from the old Local Plan), in the interim period until development sites are allocated in the DPD that will follow on from the Core Strategy. While these amendments to the supporting text of the DPD have been deemed to be 'focused changes', they are of such a nature that they are not considered to cause any effects on its overall sustainability.

A further change to the introductory section is to include reference to the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). Although this is only a textual change, it is one of relative significance. In spite of the Government's intention to revoke the RSS, at the time of preparation of the DPD the RSS remained part of the Development Plan. With the RSS itself being regarded as sound and having been subject to a rigorous Sustainability Appraisal (from which the objectives of this SA process have been derived), this DPD's conformity with it as a Development Plan, or reference to it as an evidence base, does not generate any negative sustainability effects.

While the Schedule of Focused Changes indicates that the timescale of the DPD has been amended, the relative sustainability implications of this matter are discussed below in the changes to the Spatial Strategy.

2.2 Changes to the Vision

Having assessed the proposed changes to the Core Strategy Vision against the Sustainability Appraisal Objectives (SAOs) it has been concluded that the changes neither alter the direction of the Vision or the predicted sustainability effects. Rather, the amendments give greater clarity about which parts of the District will accommodate the levels of growth that are proposed, what their specific roles will be and the relationships between the different tiers of the Settlement Hierarchy. The sustainability benefits previously identified in the SA have been further strengthened through the inclusion of these amendments. The matters included in the re-appraisal are set out below.

The amended Vision gives further detail on the role of Harworth Bircotes, setting out the 'step change' that redevelopment of the town will deliver. It expands upon how its existing strengths and assets will be utilised to harness the regeneration potential and accommodate the proposed levels of growth. Similarly, further explanation of aspirations for the Rural Service Centres helps clarify exactly what will be achieved in these areas in the plan period, setting out what type of development will be pursued to facilitate sustainable growth.

In addition to the above, there is a more explicit acknowledgement of the significance of biodiversity and the wider natural environment as an asset to the District. Including this reference draws out the benefits and opportunities that the natural environment presents for future development, therefore adding further weight to the positive effect of the Vision against the environmental SAOs.

2.3 Additional Strategic Objective

In response to the Inspector's request to consider inclusion of a new Strategic Objective on the need to plan for infrastructure delivery and sustainable development, the following objective was written:

SO10: To ensure the provision of the essential physical, social and green infrastructure required to support the District's growth.

Table 1: Sustainability Appraisal Matrix for Strategic Objective 10

| Core Strategy Objective | | Sustainability Appraisal Objective | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|---|------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 10 | To ensure the provision of the essential physical, social and green infrastructure required to support the District's growth. | — | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | — | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | — | ✓ | ✓ |

The above appraisal of the new Strategic Objective shows a strong positive effect when considered against the majority of the SAOs. The only instances of neutral or insignificant effects resulting from this objective arise in relation to provision of land for housing and economic development and protection of the historic environment. The reasons for this are largely due to the fact that the objective, while facilitating delivery of new land, will not directly deliver it, or impact upon the associated SAO indicators. In all other cases, however, provision of physical, social and green infrastructure will contribute to the long-term progression of the related sustainability issues.

Increased emphasis on infrastructure provision will also generate positive secondary effects where the SA identified areas of uncertainty in relation to delivery of specific infrastructure requirements. Specific examples occur under Policy CS1, in relation to the aspirations to reduce health inequalities (SAO2) and increase social capital (SAO5), along with the protection of natural resources (SAO8).

2.4 Changes to the Spatial Strategy

A number of minor additions have been made to the supporting text of the Spatial Strategy/Policy CS1 in order to explain more clearly that the focus of the District's growth will be in the three largest settlements. The most significant changes to the strategy, however, (subsequently requiring consideration of the potential sustainability effects) are the decisions to extend the end of the plan period from 2026 to 2028 and to incorporate greater flexibility by setting contingency criteria to enable a response to changing circumstances.

The effect of an additional 700 houses over this two-year period is potentially quite significant. While there would be increased reliance on greenfield sites for housing land provision, with only a limited amount of previously developed land available in Bassetlaw, this issue was considered under the original plan period and acknowledged in the original SA under SAO6. As such, although greenfield land release will be necessary, given that the greatest concentration of this development will occur in the main towns there will be greater scope for achieving higher densities on these sites, thereby increasing efficiency of land use, which will be more favourable under SAO8. In addition, there is a distinct likelihood that the decision to extend the plan period rather than increase the annual housing target will

progress SAO10, with more new houses being built to a higher standard of energy efficiency, due to the progressive tightening of Building Regulations.

The step of integrating contingency measures into CS1 ultimately strengthens the Spatial Strategy by giving it greater flexibility to respond to changing circumstances. While facilitating appropriate responses to shortfalls in land supply does not change the sustainability effects of the strategy, this measure adds further robustness to its sustainability under the sustainability objectives for housing and employment (SAO1 and SAO12).

To provide clarity on matters that were queried during the examination of the Core Strategy further detail has been added in the policies CS2 – CS8 and in the Spatial Strategy's supporting text. These additions primarily set out the specific quantities of houses and employment land for each tier of the settlement hierarchy, while explaining how these were derived from the supporting evidence. Although the quantity of supporting text required to give the necessary clarity is not insignificant, the changes seek to strengthen the context of the policy itself.

Another significant change to the Spatial Strategy itself is the removal of the village of Lound from the Rural Service Centre tier of the Settlement Hierarchy. Demoting Lound to the 'All Other Settlements' tier, based on inaccuracies in the original assessment of essential rural services to justify its role as a Rural Service Centre, has little bearing on the deliverability of the 10% of the residual housing target to be allocated across this tier. While Lound's removal from this tier undoubtedly has long-term sustainability effects for the village itself, the broader sustainability benefits for the overall hierarchy and the other settlements within this tier are of more significance. The key sustainability issues relating to this change are outlined below.

Because Lound does not have a Primary School, any residents of potential future housing allocation developments would have had to travel to other nearby villages to access early-years education facilities. Instead, making housing allocations in villages that do have existing Primary Schools enhances the overall sustainability of these settlements as small-scale growth areas. Furthermore, there are no significant previously developed sites available for redevelopment in Lound. Any future housing growth would, therefore, have resulted in loss of greenfield sites on the edge of the village. This is of particular significance, given that Lound is located immediately adjacent to the Sutton and Lound Gravel Pits SSSI, which is one of the most prominent wetland habitats for breeding birds in Bassetlaw.

Having considered the above changes to the Spatial Strategy, the conclusion has been drawn that there is no change to the existing SA assessment made on the Publication Core Strategy. Rather, with no changes to the overall aspirations for growth in Bassetlaw, the sustainability issues identified as being likely to incur positive impacts will be strengthened in the long-term. Where uncertainties were identified, some of these are likely to remain due their progress being dependent on further stages of the LDF or other factors beyond the scope of planning.

2.5 Changes to Harworth Bircotes Settlement Boundary

The development boundary for Harworth Bircotes was changed to incorporate that part of the colliery site outside the proposed development boundary, which was granted planning permission in 2010. The overall effect of the change of this boundary is relatively insignificant in terms of the spatial strategy, given the generally positive effects CS4 has already shown in the SA process, although the changed boundary now means that a much greater swathe of previously developed land is now considered a part of the town itself. The previous settlement boundary would have meant that applications on the associated part of the colliery site would have been assessed against Policy DM3: Development in the Countryside.

The effect of integrating this part of the site within the boundary of the town significantly increases the size of Harworth Bircotes with no net loss of greenfield land. It also means that there is a greater amount of previously developed land which, through redevelopment, can be more effectively integrated into the existing built fabric of the town.

3. Sustainability Effects of Changes to Development Management Policies

3.1 Policies DM1 – DM3

Amendments to the wording of these policies were necessary, as with most of the proposed changes, to give clarity to aspects of the policies' application that were considered unclear. These were classed as focused changes, however, as it was felt that there may have been a lack of understanding about the precise areas of the District to which the policies applied and some Representors may have felt that the policy coverage had changed. As such, wording to emphasise that development in the countryside constitutes anywhere outside of the areas defined in policies CS2 – CS8 and to include all settlements categorised under Policy CS9 and the open countryside itself. While these changes clarify the areas to which these policies should be applied, they do not alter the predicted sustainability effects identified in the SA of the Publication Core Strategy.

3.2 Policy DM6

Changes made to Policy DM6 were introduced to make the policy more flexible in providing for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople sites, particularly prior to the Site Allocations DPD (SADPD) being adopted, by specifying more clearly the criteria to be used in assessing applications. Also, additions to the supporting text set out the context in which the policy was developed (i.e. in conformity with the RSS), while acknowledging that the national policy situation is being revised.

The re-structuring of the policy has removed the necessity for 'rural exceptions', making allowances instead for allocations in appropriate rural or semi-rural locations. While permitting residential sites in the countryside may increase the likelihood of negative impacts on biodiversity (SAO6), any development proposals would still be subject to Policy DM9 and therefore be required to minimise or mitigate any such impacts. As such, the overall effects of the identified changes are not so extensive as to change the thrust of the policy. Rather, they succeed in providing greater flexibility in delivering development in an area of planning that can be fraught with tension.

3.3 Policy DM7

Alterations to Section B of this policy simply give clarification on the circumstances where the criteria should be applied. There are no changes to the predicted sustainability effects of the policy as a result of the text changes.

3.4 Policy DM9

The most significant changes to this policy have been the removal of protected open spaces (Section D) from the Proposals Map and the removal of Figures 5.1 (the Bassetlaw Green Infrastructure Network) and 5.2 (Landscape Character Policy Zones) from the DPD altogether.

Under the revised policy, open spaces and sports facilities remain protected in principle from proposals that would adversely affect or result in their loss. Identifying detailed areas and boundaries has, however, been deferred to the SADPD in order to ensure that sites are protected in tandem with the selection of sites for development. In terms of Diagrams 5.1 and 5.2, these were originally included in the DPD as they were considered to be helpful in identifying the extent of the District's Green Infrastructure Network and broad areas of landscape character/sensitivity. While these diagrams were only intended to be indicative and give context to the policy, the aims and objectives of the policy can be delivered equally as well without the diagrams alongside.

Because none of the above amendments change, fundamentally, the aims of the policy, it has been determined that there are no sustainability effects to assess at this stage. When preparing the SADPD it will, however, be imperative to consider the protection and potential effects of loss of identified open spaces and sports facilities in relation to development of specific sites.

3.5 *Policy DM10*

As above, removal of Figure 5.3 from Policy DM10 is not such a significant change that it alters the way the policy operates. The insertion of additional background text, referring to the potential impact of renewable and low carbon energy infrastructure on the Trent Valley, serves to give a more detailed context to the area for decision-makers when considering planning applications.

3.6 *Policy DM14*

Policy DM14 has been removed altogether from the DPD, due to its lack of clarity and locational specificity. While in most cases removal of an entire policy would incur significant sustainability effects for the rest of the DPD, the SA of the Publication Core Strategy showed that this policy has little impact as it neither influences delivery of the Spatial Strategy, nor enhances or mitigates any effects generated by other policies. Indeed the earlier assessment of the policy against the SAOs revealed shows that more uncertainties are generated than positive effects, given that areas of unstable land are not highlighted in the DPD and will only be identified on a case-by-case basis.

4. Conclusions

4.1 Summary of Sustainability Effects

The post-examination 'essential' changes to the Core Strategy have generally been brought about in recognition of the need to clarify and strengthen various aspects of the DPD. Although these changes have been identified as being significant enough to warrant assessment against the sustainability appraisal framework, they have not involved any fundamental changes to the policy direction of the document.

4.2 Consultation

This annex to the SA of the Core Strategy is available for consultation alongside the Post-Submission & Post-Hearing Schedule of Proposed Focused Changes from Monday 27 June to Sunday 7 August. Representation on these changes should be sent to the Planning Policy team, **not** to the Programme Officer, as follows:

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