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## 1 Foreword

A number of minor changes to policies CSP1, 2 and 6 were made following the Submission Draft Consultation in 2011. They are points of clarification and do not change the overall emphasis of the policies. Following these changes a 'light' review of the SA has been undertaken. No significant changes to the SA were made

An examination in public was held in October 2011.

The Inspector in his report (21<sup>st</sup> December 2011) on the Independent Examination into the Core Strategy concluded that the '*SA has been carried out and is adequate*' and further more the two changes he considered were needed to make the DPD sound he stated '*neither of these changes materially alters the substance of the plan and its policies, or undermines the sustainability appraisal and participatory processes undertaken*'.

The Forest of Dean Core Strategy was adopted at Council on 23rd February 2012.

### 2 Non-Technical Summary

#### 2.1 Introduction

**2.1.1** This non-technical summary aims to summarise the content and outcomes of the Sustainability Appraisal for the Forest of Dean District Council (FODDC) Core Strategy Publication Draft (21st March 2011).

#### 2.2 What is the CORE STRATEGY?

**2.2.1** The new planning system set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (PCPA) will result in the replacement of the present Structure and Local Plans.

**2.2.2** At the present local level the Local Plan will be replaced by a series of documents which will comprise a Local Development Framework (LDF).

**2.2.3** The Core Strategy provides the root for all the policies in other Development Plan Documents that will follow. It is therefore one of the first LDF documents to be prepared.

#### 2.3 Why is there a Sustainability Appraisal?

**2.3.1** Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is a required procedure which forms an integral part of the process of producing the LDF. There are six stages to the Sustainability Appraisal, these are Stages A-E which are summarised in the text below. By undertaking a Sustainability Appraisal it is possible to look at the range of policies and plans contained in the Local Development Framework (LDF) documents, and examine how they contribute to the aim of sustainable development.

**2.3.2** By looking at every policy or document in this manner it is possible to identify areas where policies may not contribute to sustainable development. By identifying these problems at an early stage, it is possible to change and amend policies or text to ensure that they are as sustainable as possible.

#### 2.4 General Results Summary

**2.4.1** A Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA - Appendix 10) was carried out as part of the Core Strategy and Sustainability Appraisal development. It indicated that there would be **NO** major effect on any the sites identified, further details are provided in Section 2.6 Habitat Regulations Assessment of the main Sustainability Appraisal Report.

**2.4.2** The Core Strategy aims to develop a new portfolio of sites based on the hierarchy across the 4 towns set out in the 2005 Local Plan (**Option B: Develop New Portfolio of Housing Sites**). When tested against the Sustainability Appraisal objectives, the overall effects are positive. There are however negative effects relating to:

- Improvement of health; due to the lack of promotion of exercise.
- Reducing the need/desire to travel by car; no active promotion of sustainable alternative methods of transport.
- Reducing non-renewable energy consumption and 'greenhouse' emissions; no policies requiring a proportion of renewable energy from each development.

**2.4.3** The Core Strategy policies have all been tested against the SA objectives, which have been formed as a result of the SA Framework (Appendix 4). The SA Framework has been developed from the District's Key Sustainability Issues Table (Table 1). The likely effects of each policy were mixed however the overall majority of effects were positive (further details can be found in both the main report and Appendix 7).

## 2.5 Stage A: Baseline Analysis

**2.5.1** Appendix 2 lists the key International, National and Local Plans that have influenced the development of the Core Strategy and Sustainability Appraisal. About 300 additional documents were also considered, including reports about the state of the District, previous versions of policies and plans and Parish level plans.

**2.5.2** As a result of the Evidence Base, a variety of main issues have arisen, which have influenced the Core Strategy development process. They are as follows:

- Transport Issues;
- The need for Economic Improvement;
- Protection of the Environment;
- Protection of Habitats and Species;
- Protection of Flood Zones;
- The need for an increase in Housing Provision (in particular Affordable Housing).

**2.5.3** During this stage the Key Sustainability Issues (Table 1) were identified by analysing the Baseline Information (Appendix 3). In addition, Baseline characteristics are also illustrated on maps contained within Appendix 3b (relating to environmental, social and economic characteristics of the district).

**2.5.4** At the end of the stage a Sustainability Appraisal Framework was developed which identified 17 local sustainability objectives and future indicators (Appendix 4). This was then circulated to English Heritage, The Environment Agency, Natural England and Gloucestershire County Council for their comments (Appendix 8).

### 2.6 Stage B: Option Assessment

**2.6.1** During this stage the SA appraised in broad terms, a variety of options open to the CS. The SA then looked in greater detail at the predicted effects of the preferred option through the analysis of the Core Strategy policies.

**2.6.2** The objectives of the SA (Stage A) and the objectives of the CS Preferred Options document are reviewed and checked for compatibility. Where there is a conflict between 2 objectives one is prioritised over the other (Appendix 5).

**2.6.3** The constraints imposed by Government policy must be taken account of when considering the range of possible options for the Core Strategy. This narrowed the process down to the following 10 options (4 of which were developed as a result of SA analysis of the Core Strategy 1st Preferred Options):

- **OPTION A: Development based on the 2005 Local Plan**
- **OPTION B: Develop New Portfolio of Housing Sites**
- **OPTION C: More even Dispersal across Towns**
- **OPTION D: Focus Development in One Town**
- **OPTION E: Tourism Focus to Employment Development**
- **OPTION F: Greater Dispersal to Towns and Villages**
- **OPTION G: SA Themed Option - Employment Focus**
- **OPTION H: SA Themed Option - Increased Housing Numbers**
- **OPTION I: SA Themed Option - Reduced Housing Numbers**
- **OPTION J: SA Themed Option - Landscape Character (small scale development)**

**2.6.4** The sustainability implications of these options were tested against the SA Framework (Stage A). The results of which can be found in Appendix 6. Broadly, options focusing development in one town or greater dispersal to the villages were considered less sustainable, principally through potential impacts on local services and increased private car travel.

**2.6.5** The preferred option for the Core Strategy is to continue the Local Plan approach whilst taking greater account of the needs and capabilities of individual settlements (with elements from Option A, B, E and J).

**2.6.6** A total of 17 policies have been developed in the CS to express this option. These were tested against the sustainability objectives (Stage A) to predict the effects of the option (Appendix 7). Broadly the policies are assessed as being positive or neutral depending on the policy intent.

**2.6.7** Six key areas for mitigating adverse effects of the policies have been identified:

1. Diversifying the range of employment opportunities (SA objective 3) is not easy to achieve. The SA assumes that the provision of a range of employment sites will stimulate diversification of the employment sector. The preferred strategy provides encouragement and opportunity for diversification as well as ensuring the quality and environment of such sites. No further opportunities for market intervention have been identified.
2. Rural elements of Policy CSP5 Housing and CSP16 Villages are considered to have negative elements in relation to the dispersed nature of the likely developments and reliance on private car transport. These policies have been adapted to ensure access to reasonable standards of public transport are an important consideration of the policies.
3. The impacts on landscape (SA Objective 10) have been identified as variable depending on the nature of proposals. The SA identifies that the implementation of the Council's Landscape Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is vital in mitigating this variability.
4. The implementation of County Council's SPD on waste minimisation is seen an important mitigating factor in considering use of resources (SA Objective 16).
5. Flood risk; The SA evaluation has assumed that any policy implications identified with the Strategic Flood Risk Assessments will be implemented through the Core Strategy policies..
6. The impacts of the policies on habitats and species has been identified as variable. Through the assessment of the Evidence Base it is clear that the requirements of PPS 9 and Circular 06/2005 provide assessment guidance that would mitigate this variability. It is not considered necessary to repeat this guidance in the Core Strategy.

## 2.7 Stage C: Report Preparation

**2.7.1** Preparing the SA Report (essentially this report).

## 2.8 Stage D: Public Consultation

**2.8.1** The SA was initially presented with the CS First Preferred Options document for public consultation in May 2006. During this period comments were invited on both the Core Strategy and Sustainability Appraisal.

**2.8.2** This SA was then presented together with the CS Second Preferred Options document for public consultation for a period of 6 weeks (3rd March 08 - 14th April 08). During that period comments were invited on both the CS Second Preferred Options and SA documents.

Copies of the Documents were available for viewing at local libraries, Council Offices or on the Council's web site <http://www.fdean.gov.uk>.

## 2 Non-Technical Summary

**2.8.3** A number of minor changes to policies CSP1, 2 and 6 have been made following the Submission Draft Consultation July 2011. They are points of clarification and do not change the overall emphasis of the policies. Following these changes a 'light' review of the SA has been undertaken. No significant changes to the SA were made. A technical change was made to the SA Framework (Appendix 4) replacing issues EN 3 with EN5 in relation to Local Objective 12; following comments from the Environment Agency.

### 2.9 Stage E: Monitoring

**2.9.1** Monitoring the effects of the Core Strategy will be undertaken by using the key indicators identified in the SA Framework (Appendix 4).

**2.9.2** These indicators will be reported on in the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) of the Local Development Framework produced by the Council.



