

Bromsgrove District Council

Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document Sustainability Appraisal



NOVEMBER 2009



Planning and
Environment Services

Bromsgrove District Council
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Introduction

This document accompanies the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) - Affordable Housing. It reports the findings of a sustainability appraisal of the SPD undertaken inline with Planning Policy Statement 12 (PPS12) Local Spatial Planning.

Supporting the achievement of sustainable development is a proper consideration of SPD. As such the SPD has been prepared as far as possible with the achievement of sustainable development as a core theme. Sustainable development is essentially about quality of life for all, now and in the future. It is about meeting the environmental, economic and social needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The Sustainability Appraisal is subject to consultation alongside the proposed SPD, and comments are welcome on any aspect of the appraisal progress.

The provision of affordable housing is a key issue in the Bromsgrove Sustainable Community Strategy (2010-2013). However, the delivery of affordable housing must also be balanced against the various environmental, social and economic policy objectives that exist. One of the key roles of the Sustainability Appraisal is to ensure that an appropriate balance of these issues and to highlight any potential conflicts.

Sustainable Development

As stated in PPS1 the Government has set out four aims for sustainable development in its strategy: *A Better Quality of Life, a Strategy for Sustainable Development in the UK*. The four aims are:

- Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment;
- Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;
- Effective protection of the environment; and
- Prudent use of natural resources.

Section 39 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires Local Development Documents to be prepared with a view to contributing to the achievement of sustainable development.

Sustainability Appraisals

Sustainability Appraisal is a process undertaken during the preparation of Development Plan Documents (DPD) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) to identify and report the extent to which the implementation of the DPD/SPD will achieve the environmental, economic and social objectives of sustainable development. The process undertaken here measures the extent to which the Affordable Housing Provision SPD is likely to have a positive or negative impact on sustainability and the extent to which it therefore works towards or against the achievement of sustainable development.

Local planning authorities must comply with European Union Directive 2001/42/EC which requires formal strategic environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes which are likely to have significant effects on the environment. The Directive applies to local development documents where formal preparation began after 21st July 2004. The Directive has been incorporated into English law by virtue of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations 2004. Local planning authorities must comply with these Regulations as well as the Regulations under Part 2 of the Act when preparing local development documents.

A sustainability appraisal is a systematic and iterative appraisal process, incorporating the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive. The purpose of a sustainability appraisal is to appraise the social, environmental and economic effects of the strategies and policies in a local development document from the outset of the preparation process. This is to ensure that decisions are made that accord with sustainable development.

PPS12 states that to be effective, sustainability appraisal should be fully integrated into the plan making process. They 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.

In carrying out appraisals, local planning authorities are required to have regard to the specific objectives and principles of sustainable development as outlined in Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1). PPS1 states that planning should facilitate and promote sustainable patterns of urban and rural development by:

- Making suitable land available for development in line with economic, social and environmental objectives to improve the quality of life.
- Contributing to sustainable economic growth.
- Protecting and where possible enhancing the natural and historic environment and the quality and character of the countryside, and existing communities.
- Ensuring high quality development through good and inclusive design, and the efficient use of resources; and
- Ensuring that development supports existing communities and contributes to the creation of safe, sustainable, liveable and mixed communities with good access to jobs and key services for all members of the community.

PPS12 requires the potential direct, indirect and cumulative impacts of different policy options to be identified and appraised. This is in order to integrate sustainable development objectives in to the formulation of policy and to inform decisions on which options should be promoted in local development documents. The Affordable Housing SPD is concerned with the tenure of development and not the location of housing sites. The SPD does not seek, necessarily, to build more houses but rather to secure a proportion of those houses that are built as affordable houses. The difference between building private market housing and affordable housing in terms of their impact on their surroundings is negligible, assuming a reasonable standard of finish for both types. Sustainability issues as a consequence of tenure are limited. In addition, the SPD is based upon the recommendation of the Housing Needs Assessment and the Strategic Housing Market Assessment. Therefore, there is not a detailed array of policy options available and a full sustainability appraisal as outlined in PPS12 is not possible. However, a sustainability appraisal of the SPD has been carried out based upon the sustainability criteria developed for the scoping report.

PPS12 states that full regard should be had to the chain of conformity. This is to avoid duplication of assessment in preparing an appraisal for a local development document that conforms with another local development document or conforms generally with the Regional Spatial Strategy (which is also subject to sustainability appraisal). The affordable housing policy builds upon the principle of Policy CF7: Delivering Affordable Housing in the emerging RSS. Therefore, the principle of negotiating for affordable housing has already been established.

The SPD is built upon the findings of the Housing Market Assessment and Strategic Housing Market Assessment and operates within existing national, regional and local guidance that restrict the way this SPD can deliver affordable housing. As such a 'scoping document' has not been undertaken.

Developing the Criteria

The Sustainability Appraisal Framework is central to the Sustainability Appraisal process as it provides, through the defining of objectives, a way in which sustainability effects can be described, analysed and compared. The Sustainability Appraisal Framework was identified in the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (2005). These were based on the sustainability issues affecting the district, as identified in the baseline study, plans and strategies affecting the LDF and consultation with the public including feedback from the Local Strategic Partnership. The Sustainability Objectives cover social, economic and environmental consideration in a bid to ascertain whether planning documents are helping to deliver sustainable development in the district of Bromsgrove.

A Joint Sustainability Appraisal Framework for Worcestershire has been developed by the 6 local authorities in conjunction with the County Council. This joint framework and in particular the objectives provide a starting point from which each local authority can develop a more localised SA Framework. Bromsgrove's Sustainability Objectives are in full conformity with those set out in the Joint SA Framework for Worcestershire.

Undertaking the Appraisal

The process of undertaking the appraisal involved testing the Affordable Housing SPD against each of the sustainability criteria. An informed decision was taken about the extent to which the implementation of the SPD is likely to have a positive or negative impact on each of the criteria. The impact was measured using the following key in Table 1.

Table 1
Explanation of Matrix Notification

Alignment	Description	Symbol
Major Positive Impact	The proposed policy contributes significantly to the achievement of the objective.	++
Positive Impact	The proposed policy contributes to the achievement of the objective but not significantly.	+
No Impact/Neutral	There is no clear relationship between the proposed development and/or the achievement of the objective or relationships is negligible.	0
Negative Impact	The proposed policy detracts from the achievement of the objective but not significantly.	-
Major Negative Impact	The proposed development detracts significantly from the objective	--
Uncertain Impact - more information required	The proposed policy either has both a positive and negative relationship to objective or the relationship is dependant on the way in which the aspect is managed. Insufficient information may be available to enable an assessment to be made.	?

Assessment Matrix

Social Sustainability Objectives	Impact of Affordable Housing SPD
SO1 The provision of housing to meet local needs	++
SO2 An improvement in the health and well-being of the population	0
SO3 A reduction in poverty and social exclusion	++
SO4 Quality education opportunities for all	0
SO5 Reduce and prevent crime and the fear of crime	?
SO6 Vibrant and locally distinctive communities	0
SO7 Accessible services and opportunities for culture, leisure and recreation for all	0
SO8 Increased travel choice and accessibility through integrated transport facilities	0
SO9 Reduction in ambient noise levels and incidences of noise pollution	-
Environmental Sustainability Objectives	
ENV1 To conserve and enhance the districts Biodiversity	-
ENV2 Protect the countryside, green spaces Green Belt and best agricultural land	?
ENV3 Preserve and enhance the district's high quality landscapes	?
ENV4 Protect and enhance the qualities of the historic environment	0
ENV5 Address the waste hierarchy (reduce, reuse, recycle)	0
ENV6 To protect and enhance water quality and maintain sustainable water resources	0
ENV7 Reduce the number of properties at risk from flooding	0
ENV8 To guard against land contamination and encourage remediation of contaminated sites	0
ENV9 To achieve optimum use of previously developed land to support regeneration	0
ENV10 To increase energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions	0
ENV11 To improve air quality throughout the district	0
Economic Sustainability Objectives	
ECON1 To achieve high and stable levels of employment	0
ECON2 To encourage sustainable economic growth and a diverse economy	0
ECON3 To support the development of a skilled workforce to meet the needs of business	0
ECON4 To achieve the sustainable uses and development of material assets	0

Reasoning

Where an impact on any of the objectives has been noted (either positive or negative) the reasoning or justification behind the extent of the impact is given below:

Sustainability Objective	Impact	Justification
SOC1 The provision of housing to meet identified needs	++	The SPD specifically focuses upon affordable housing and ensuring that the needs of the district are fulfilled. The SPD is based upon the findings of the Housing Market Assessment and the Strategic Housing Market Assessment.
SOC3 A reduction in poverty and social exclusion	++	The provision of affordable housing will help to reduce poverty and social exclusion by providing affordable properties for those who are in greatest need and not in a position to purchase housing at full market price.
SOC9 A reduction in ambient noise levels and incidences of noise pollution	-	New housing has the potential to increase noise levels, particularly in small rural settlements.
ENV1 To conserve and enhance the districts biodiversity	-	The creation of housing sites has the potential to lead to a loss of biodiversity, particularly in rural areas.

There are concerns over the potential negative impact of the SPD in terms of noise pollution and biodiversity however I consider that these risks can be managed. Whilst building houses does create some noise, which would be particularly evident in rural locations I consider the use of planning conditions to restrict the hours of working on site could help to mitigate this impact. It is also important to bear in mind the temporary nature of any noise nuisance in relation to the long term benefit of delivering affordable housing.

Areas of specific ecological value are protected by statutory designations and the use of planning conditions can be used to minimise any harm to biodiversity or even seek environmental improvements where feasible. Potential negative environmental impacts maybe outweighed by the benefits brought about by increasing the supply of affordable housing in rural settlements, and these issues will be considered on a site by site basis through the development control process.

In light of the above, it is considered that there are no significant conflicting issues in relation to the SPD objectives and the Sustainability Appraisal Framework.



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