

Bracknell Forest Borough Local Development Framework **Amen Corner Area Action Plan**

PLANNING



PLACES

PEOPLE

Sustainability Appraisal Report (Preferred Options) Summary



**AMEN CORNER AREA ACTION PLAN DEVELOPMENT PLAN
DOCUMENT PREFERRED OPTIONS
DRAFT SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL
NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

Bracknell Forest Borough Council is preparing a framework of documents which will guide development in your Borough. This will advise how and where housing, shops, offices, industry, transport and leisure facilities are located.

An essential consideration when drawing up these documents is their effect on the environment and people's quality of life, both now and in the future.

The Amen Corner Area Action Plan Issues and Options Report is an early consultation stage in the production of this Development Plan Document. This stage has been tested with a 'Sustainability Appraisal' to ensure that environmental, social and economic issues are taken into account in their preparation.

Some of the suggestions from the first stage of the Sustainability Appraisal are:

- The development of the Amen Corner site should not affect the integrity of the Thames Basin Heath SPA and should promote and enhance biodiversity features located on site, including Riggs Copse.
- The potential for land contamination and its impact on controlled waters and human health should be considered as key constraints for the development at this site.
- An integrated drainage strategy (SUDs) should be considered as key to the development of the site.
- Consideration should be given to the potential location of development in relation to Wokingham and the potential impacts on the characteristic countryside of Wokingham borough.

The appraisal has tried to balance all of these issues, and others, and then suggest how the development plans can be changed so they protect the environment and give people a good quality of life.

Please read on for a more detailed summary of the appraisal process.

Introduction

This leaflet summarises the findings of a Draft Sustainability Appraisal on documents within the Borough's Local Development Framework. More detail can be found in the full Draft Sustainability Appraisal Report (Preferred Options) and the Amen Corner Area Action Plan Preferred Options Report. These documents are available by request or can be downloaded from the Bracknell Forest Borough Council website: www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/SA (and then following the link to the Amen Corner Sustainability Appraisal page) and www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/amencorner.

The Local Development Framework

The current Bracknell Forest Borough Local Plan is being replaced by the Bracknell Forest Borough Local Development Framework (LDF). This is a collection of documents containing policies and proposals to guide future development in the Borough.

The Amen Corner Area Action plan is a Development Plan Document being prepared by the Borough Council as part of its Local Development Scheme (LDS).

Integrating Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is often referred to as '*development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*'. All local planning authorities must test their plans using a 'Sustainability Appraisal' and a 'Strategic Environmental Assessment' to make sure they are consistent with the aims of sustainable development and protect the environment.

There are a number of key issues that relate to the development of the Amen Corner site; these have been identified through early discussion with the public, local residents, statutory bodies, landowners and developers. Each of these issues can be addressed through a number of options which together form a number of potential plans for the site.

These various options for development are presented in the 'Issues and Options' paper on the Amen Corner Area Action Plan Development Plan Document.

This Initial Sustainability Appraisal has considered these proposed options and appraised the impact of each upon the sustainability of the Borough.

The results of the appraisal will help develop and refine the options by highlighting the sustainability implications of each, predicting the effects, and suggesting recommendations for improvement. These results will inform the final decisions, but do not give the definitive answer on which should go forward as the preferred policy option.

SCOPING

Before the production of the DPDs starts, a scoping stage is necessary to propose and agree the appraisal methodology and collate the information needed to carry this out. The appraisal needs to be set within the context of existing plans and policies and an understanding of the current baseline situation is essential to predict effects and identify key sustainability issues and problems.

Sustainability is a complex issue so 24 sustainability objectives were produced to consider relevant local issues. These objectives cover a range of social, environmental and economic impacts, for example: protecting and enhancing human health, conserving and enhancing biodiversity, ensuring high and stable levels of employment, and addressing the causes of climate change. A complete list of objectives can be found in the full report.

REFINING OPTIONS AND PREDICTING EFFECTS

There are a number of key issues that relate to the development of the site; these have been identified through early discussion with the public, local residents, statutory bodies, landowners and developers. Each of these issues can be addressed through a number of options which together form a number of potential plans for the site.

The methodology for carrying out a Sustainability Appraisal, proposed at the scoping stage, was used to test each of these options and predict their significant positive and negative impacts on the range of sustainability issues. Recommendations were made on the most sustainable options and these suggestions were fed into the plan-making process. This, alongside public consultation responses, informed the choice of policy approach.

Changes made:

A range of alternative ways of meeting the Amen Corner AAP objectives was tested using the methodology set out at the scoping stage. The options with the most positive and least negative sustainability impacts were recommended to the plan-makers, and without exception these were the policies which have been taken forward as policy approaches in the Amen Corner Area Action Plan Development Plan Document – Preferred Option May 2008

EVALUATION OF EFFECTS

Once the policy approaches were selected, their likely significant effects were evaluated by testing potential outcomes against the baseline data and targets set in other plans and programmes. During this evaluation, measures were suggested to mitigate against adverse impacts and maximise beneficial effects to further improve the sustainability of each policy.

Changes made:

As the policy approaches were developing, each was appraised to evaluate any specific impacts; the identification of these impacts and proposals for improvement helped fine-tune the plan and enhance its sustainability. Details of all proposed and incorporated changes can be found in the Draft SA

Report, but some of these included amendments to the following policy approaches:

- AC1: (Development Area) – to include reference the necessity for open space requirements.
- AC3 (Infrastructure) – to include reference the need for measures for the provision of an integrated Sustainable Urban Drainage System.
- AC9 (Sustainable Resource Management) – this additional policy was proposed to ensure developments meet best practice standards
- AC11 (biodiversity and wildlife) – this policy was introduced to mitigate against the effect of policy AC2 (quantum of development) and AC13 (employment level and type).

DRAFT SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL REPORT

The full process has been documented in the Draft Sustainability Appraisal Report (Bracknell Forest Borough Council, 2008). This gives details of the sustainability impacts of each DPD, changes which were made as a result of the process, limitations and assumptions, the evidence base and how consultation responses have been included to date.

The Draft SA Report is a document for public participation, so if you would like a copy for comment please download from www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk or contact:

Melissa Read
Environmental Policy Officer
Bracknell Forest Borough Council
Time Square
Market Street
Bracknell RG12 1JD

melissa.read@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

01344 351185

The closing date for responses is **Friday 11th July 2008**