

Scoping Report

Sustainability Appraisal
(incorporating
Strategic Environmental
Assessment)

Character Areas Supplementary Planning Document

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1. Introduction

1.1 An essential consideration when drawing up planning documents is their effect on the environment and people's quality of life, both now and in the future. To help address this, **Sustainability Appraisals** and **Strategic Environmental Assessments** are carried out alongside the preparation of these plans to make sure social, environmental and economic issues are taken into account at every stage.

1.2 The Bracknell Forest Local Development Framework (LDF) comprises a number of individual documents that together will guide the future development of the Borough. There are two types of document:

- Development Plan Documents (DPDs) which contain policies and proposals; and
- Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) which contain the detail needed to implement the policies.

1.3 The Character Areas document is an SPD which will formalise guidance on future development within specific areas that have specific character or interest.

2. Sustainable Development

2.1 Sustainable development first moved into mainstream policy making and legislation after the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, having emerged as a key issue in 1987, highlighted by Bruntland. Following the Rio Earth Summit, the UK government produced 'A Better Quality of Life, a Strategy for Sustainable Development in the UK' (1999), which described the main themes of sustainable development. These were highlighted as being:

- 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
- The prudent use of natural resources.

2.2 Subsequently, in March 2005 a new UK framework for sustainable development 'Securing the Future' was launched which took account of new policies since 1999, and highlighted the renewed international push for sustainable development from the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. Five principles of sustainable development are identified in 'Securing the Future':

- Living within environmental limits;
- Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society;
- Achieving a sustainable economy;
- Promoting good governance; and
- Using sound science responsibly.

2.3 A Council Officer and member working group drafted a local definition of sustainable development which has been adopted by Bracknell Forest Council:

" Sustainable development is development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Therefore sustainability is acting to create harmony between a developed economy and the environment."

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2.4 For ease of use the themes of sustainability are typically categorised under the three general headings of: social, economic and environmental. However, in reality many of the issues overlap and do not fall distinctly into one of these categories.

2.5 The Character Areas SPD should be based on the principles of sustainable development.

3. Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal

3.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is required in the EU by an EU Directive (2001/42/EC) on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment. This Directive is often referred to as the “SEA Directive”. SPDs are considered to have the potential for causing significant environmental effects, and are therefore required to be screened for SEA to ensure that significant negative environmental effects are minimised and the positive environmental effects are maximised.

3.2 Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is required in the UK by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. However, the recent Planning Act 2008 has removed the requirement for carrying out SA of SPDs. Although SA is no longer required for SPDs, Bracknell Forest Council has decided to prepare an SA incorporating SEA for the Character Areas SPD. This ensures that social and economic factors are considered as well as environmental.

3.3 As there are many cross-overs between SA and SEA, government guidance ⁽¹⁾ has recommended that the two processes be undertaken simultaneously. This approach has been taken for the Character Areas SPD, therefore where SA is referred to this also incorporates the requirements of SEA.

4. Character Areas Supplementary Planning Document

4.1 As well as helping to interpret policy CS7 of the Core Strategy DPD (February 2008), the Character Areas SPD will identify areas with distinctive and positive character within the Borough, in particular areas under significant development pressure. It will provide an assessment of the character and recommendations relating to maintaining and enhancing character within these specific areas. The assessments and recommendations will then be used as a tool to inform developers, architects, designers, planners, highway engineers, and the local community to ensure that future change and development is appropriate in context and character, to the existing environment and communities within the Borough.

4.2 The intention to prepare the Character Areas SPD is highlighted in the Bracknell Forest Local Development Scheme (April 2007) which sets out the timetable for preparing documents that will form part of the Local Development Framework.

5. Core Strategy Objectives

5.1 The Bracknell Forest Core Strategy identifies 12 Spatial Objectives to guide development in the Borough up until 2026. These are as follows:

A	To plan for a balance of housing and employment growth
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¹ ODPM (2005) *Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents*

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B	To aid delivery of housing in the Borough, which meets the needs of all sectors of the community, including the provision of affordable housing
C	To deliver the regeneration of Bracknell town centre
D	To promote a sequential approach to the location of new development
E	To promote a transport system which enables access to services, by a choice of transport modes
F	To ensure high quality well designed development is delivered in the Borough
G	To support and facilitate essential community facilities and infrastructure in accessible locations
H	To deliver accessible development meeting the needs of the Borough
I	To maintain and improve the built and natural environment, and to avoid or mitigate the effects of new development upon the natural and historic environment
J	To maintain high and stable levels of economic growth
K	To promote the sustainable use and disposal of resources
L	To mitigate against and adapt to climate change

5.2 The content of the Character Areas SPD will contribute to meeting some or all of these Spatial Objectives guiding development in the borough up until 2026.

6. Stages of the SA Process

6.1 Government guidance on SA ⁽²⁾ identifies the various stages of SA and how these relate to the different stages of preparing an SPD such as the Character Areas SPD. The stages are shown in **Table 1** below, taken from the ODPM guidance.

SPD Stage 1: Pre-production - Evidence Gathering
SA stages and tasks
<p>Stage A: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A1: Identifying other relevant policies, plans and programmes, and sustainability objectives • A2: Collecting baseline information • A3: Identifying sustainability issues and problems • A4: Developing the SA framework • A5: Consulting on the scope of the SA
SPD Stage 2: Production - Prepare draft SPD
SA stages and tasks
Stage B: Developing and refining options and assessing effects

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SPD Stage 1: Pre-production - Evidence Gathering
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B1: Testing the SPD objectives against the SA framework • B2: Developing the SPD options • B3: Predicting the effects of the SPD • B4: Evaluating the effects of the SPD • B5: Considering ways of mitigating adverse effects and maximising beneficial effects • B6: Proposing measures to monitor the significant effects of implementing the SPD
<p>Stage C: Preparing the Sustainability Appraisal Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C1: Preparing the SA Report
<p>Stage D: Consulting on the draft SPD and Sustainability Appraisal Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D1: Public participation on the SA Report and the draft SPD • D2: Assessing significant changes
SPD Stage 3: Adoption
SA stages and tasks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D3: Making decisions and providing information
<p>Stage E: Monitoring the significant effects of implementing the SPD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E1: Finalising aims and methods for monitoring • E2: Responding to adverse effects

Table 1 Stages of the SA Process

6.2 This report, along with the LDF SA Scoping Report represents Stage A shown in Table 1 above. The purpose of this stage is to agree the SA methodology and collate the information needed to carry out the SA. 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 help predict effects and identify key sustainability issues and problems.

6.3 Government guidance on Sustainability Appraisal ⁽³⁾ states that Planning Authorities can prepare a single Scoping Report when consulting on the scope of a number of Local Development Documents at the same time. Therefore the LDF SA Scoping Report ⁽⁴⁾ sets out elements common to the scope and level of detail of the SA Reports for the documents in the Local Development Framework. As individual documents from the LDF are prepared, a scoping of additional details specific to the document is prepared. This Character Areas SPD SA Scoping report is one such report. This approach has already been followed for documents prepared so far for the LDF. This report should therefore be read in conjunction with the LDF SA Scoping Report which can be viewed online at www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk or supplied on request from the Council.

7. Task A1 - Identifying Other Relevant Plans, Programmes and Sustainability Objectives

Aim: Identify and review other relevant policies, plans, programmes, and sustainable development objectives that will affect or influence the SPD.

3 ODPM (2005) *Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents*
 4 Bracknell Forest Council (2006) *Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating a Strategic Environmental Assessment) Revised Scoping Report, Bracknell Forest Borough Local Development Framework*

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7.1 The LDF SA Scoping Report includes a wide-ranging review of the plans, policies and programmes which are likely to impact on the plans within the Local Development Framework. The review of plans, policies and programmes is available as a separate document ⁽⁵⁾ on the Council's website at the following location: www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sa. As part of this SPD scoping this list has been examined to establish whether additional documents should be included which are specifically relevant to the production of the Character Areas SPD. The following documents are thought to impact specifically on this SPD and the associated SA:

Plan/Programme	Summary
Manual for Streets (2007) Department for Transport, CLG	Provides advice on the design of residential streets in England and Wales. Indicates that increased consideration should be given to the 'place' function of streets. The importance of safety is stressed, but it is highlighted that this should not be at the expense of other considerations.
Urban Design Compendium 2: Delivering Quality Places (2007) English Partnerships, Housing Corporation, Roger Evans Associates Ltd	Provides guidance on good urban design, including identifying principles of urban design and explaining how these can be applied to create successful places.
Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3): Housing (2006) CLG	Indicates that Local Planning Authorities should facilitate good design by identifying the distinctive features that define the character of a particular local area. Highlights that new residential development should be well integrated with neighbouring buildings and the local area.
Better Places to Live by Design: A Companion Guide to PPG3 (2001) DTLR, CABE	Emphasises the need for better design of residential areas. Highlights that quality of life can be improved if residential areas are well-planned, well-designed, and well-managed. Encourages better linkages between planning and design, and for local authorities and developers to think more imaginatively about design and layout.
By Design - Urban Design in the Planning System: Towards Better Practice (2000) CABE, DETR	Highlights the importance of good design and how it is important <i>everywhere</i> . States that good design arises from a thorough and caring understanding of place and context and as no two places are the same so there can be no blueprint for good design.
Places, Streets and Movement: A Companion Guide to Design Bulletin 32 - Residential Roads and Footpaths (1998) ODPM	Advises that streets should be less dominated by cars and roads, so that there is a balance between highway requirements and other requirements. Density, building form and enclosure are highlighted as the key ingredients in creating a sense of local identity.

Table 2 Additional Relevant Plans and Programmes

5 Bracknell Forest Council (2006) *Generic Review of Plans, Programmes and Policies (PPPs): to inform Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment within the Borough of Bracknell Forest*.

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This guidance will inform the production of the Character Areas SPD, and the associated Sustainability Appraisal.

8. Task A2 - Developing Baseline Information

Aim: Collect relevant social, environmental and economic baseline information and produce a characterisation of the SPD area.

8.1 A comprehensive amount of baseline data is presented in the LDF SA Scoping Report. The baseline information for the SA Scoping Report is available as a separate document⁽⁶⁾ on the Council’s website at the following location: www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sa. This SPD scoping exercise has identified that the level of detail contained in the aforementioned report is sufficient for the Character Areas SPD and therefore no additional baseline data is necessary to inform the production of this plan.

9. Task A3 - Identifying Sustainability Issues

Aim: Identify key sustainability issues for the SA to address.

9.1 The LDF SA Scoping Report provides information on the significant sustainability issues within Bracknell Forest. This scoping exercise has identified that there are no additional issues which must be considered to inform the production of this SPD.

9.2 From the higher tier SA detailed above the following are presumed to be the most relevant to the Character Areas SPD:

- Housing provision for all;
- Access to essential facilities;
- Protecting the landscape character of the Borough.

10. Task A4 - Developing the SA Framework

Aim: Develop the SA framework, consisting of the sustainability objectives, indicators and targets.

10.1 Sustainability is a complex issue so 24 sustainability objectives were identified in the LDF SA Scoping Report to consider relevant local issues covering a range of social, environmental and economic impacts. The justification for their selection and a testing for internal compatibility are detailed in the LDF SA Scoping Report.

10.2 As the Character Areas SPD relates to a specific topic, it is possible that not all the SA objectives will be relevant for consideration. Table 3 below, lists the SA objectives, and indicates which are relevant to this SPD.

Bracknell Forest Council SA Objectives	Can this objective be delivered by the SPD?
1. To meet local housing needs by ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent, sustainably constructed and affordable home	Yes

⁶ Bracknell Forest Council (2006) *Baseline data, characterisation, indicators and trends: to inform Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment within the Borough of Bracknell Forest.*

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Bracknell Forest Council SA Objectives	Can this objective be delivered by the SPD?
2. To reduce the risk of flooding and harm to people, property and the environment	No
3. To protect and enhance human health and wellbeing	Yes
4. To reduce poverty and social exclusion	No
5. To raise educational achievement levels	No
6. To reduce and prevent crime and the fear of crime	Yes
7. To create and sustain vibrant and locally distinctive communities	Yes
8. To provide accessible essential services and facilities	Yes
9. To make opportunities for culture, leisure and recreation readily accessible	Yes
10. To encourage urban renaissance by improving efficiency in land use, design and layout. This includes making best use of previously developed land in meeting future development needs	Yes
11. To maintain air quality and improve where possible	No
12. To address the causes of climate change through reducing emissions of greenhouse gases, and ensure Bracknell Forest is prepared for associated impacts	No
13. To conserve and enhance the Borough's biodiversity	No
14. To protect and enhance where possible the Borough's characteristic countryside and its historic environment in urban and rural areas	Yes
15. To improve travel choice and accessibility, reduce the need for travel by car and shorten the length and duration of journeys	No
16. To sustainably use and re-use renewable and non-renewable resources	No
17. To address the waste hierarchy by: minimising waste as a priority, reuse, then by recycling, composting or energy recovery	No
18. To maintain and improve water quality in the Borough's water courses and to achieve sustainable water resource management	No
19. To maintain and improve soil quality	No
20. To increase energy efficiency, and the proportion of energy generated from renewable sources in the Borough	No
21. To ensure high and stable levels of employment	No
22. To sustain economic growth and competitiveness of the Borough	Yes
23. To encourage 'smart' economic growth	No

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Bracknell Forest Council SA Objectives	Can this objective be delivered by the SPD?
24. To develop and maintain a skilled workforce by developing the opportunities for everyone to acquire the skills needed to find work	No

Table 3 Relevance of SA Objectives to the Character Areas SPD

10.3 As many of the LDF SA objectives are relevant to this SPD the Sustainability Appraisal Framework detailed in the LDF Scoping Report is directly applicable. Therefore the SA Framework table has not been reproduced in this document.

11. Task A5 - Consulting on the Scope of the SA

Aim: Produce a Scoping Report and consult relevant authorities, the public and other key stakeholders on the scope of the appraisal and the key issues and possible options for solutions

11.1 A key component of the Sustainability Appraisal process is consultation with stakeholders. The Environmental Assessment of Plans and programmes Regulations 2004 (Regulation 12(6)) requires the responsible authority to give consultation bodies a period of **5 weeks** to respond from the date it receives the Scoping Report. Consultation is required to include the statutory environmental consultees: Natural England, the Environment Agency, and English Heritage. Other bodies may be consulted as appropriate, and this Scoping Report will be available to the public via the Council's website.

11.2 Consultation seeks to:

- Ensure the SA is comprehensive and robust enough to support the SPD during the later stages of full public consultation.
- Advise on the appropriateness of the sustainability objectives.
- Advise on the appropriateness of the key sustainability issues.
- Advise on the comprehensiveness of the baseline data.

12. Consultation Questions

The following questions should be used to guide the formation of a consultation response:

- 1) Are there other relevant policies, plans, programmes or sustainable development objectives that will affect or influence the SPD?
- 2) Do you agree that the baseline data collected is appropriate to the SPD?
- 3) Do you have, or know of, any additional relevant baseline data which should be added to that already listed?
- 4) As far as you are aware, are there any inaccuracies or anomalies in the data presented?
- 5) Do you agree that these are the key sustainability issues for Bracknell Forest?
- 6) Are you aware of any issues which, in your opinion, should be added, or any that should be removed?
- 7) Are the objectives suitable in the context of Bracknell Forest?

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- 8) Are there any additional objectives that should be included or should any be removed?
- 9) Do the indicators provide a relevant measure for the associated objective? If not then please suggest additional indicators.
- 10) Do you have any comments on the suggested targets?
- 11) Do you have any further comments on the information in the Sustainability Appraisal Framework?

Please return any comments on the above questions or any other relevant issues by 11th May 2009 to:

rachel.scott@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

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Time Square

Market Street

Bracknell

RG12 1JD

01344 351608

13. References

Bracknell Forest Council (February 2008) *Core Strategy Development Plan Document*

Bracknell Forest Borough Council (April 2006) *Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating a Strategic Environmental Assessment) Revised Scoping Report: Bracknell Forest Borough Local Development Framework*

Bracknell Forest Council (Jan 2006) *Generic Review of Plans, Programmes and Policies (PPPs): To inform Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment within the Borough of Bracknell Forest*

Bracknell Forest Council (Jan 2006) *Baseline Data, Characterisation, Indicators and Trends: To inform Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment within the Borough of Bracknell Forest*

CABE, DETR (2000) *By Design - Urban Design in the Planning System: Towards Better Practice*

CLG (2006) *Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3): Housing*

Department for Transport, CLG (2007) *Manual for Streets*

DTLR, CABE (2001) *Better Places to Live by Design: A Companion Guide to PPG3*

English Partnerships, Housing Corporation, Roger Evans Associates Ltd (2007) *Urban Design Compendium 2: Delivering Quality Places*

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European Commission (2001) *Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment*

ODPM (2005) *Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks*

ODPM (1998) *Places, Streets and Movement: A Companion Guide to Design Bulletin 32 - Residential Roads and Footpaths*

UK Government (2005) *Securing the Future*

UK Government(1999) *A Better Quality of Life, a Strategy for Sustainable Development in the UK*

Copies of this booklet may be obtained in large print, Braille, on audio cassette or in other languages. To obtain a copy in an alternative format please telephone 01344 352000.

Nepali

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Tagalog

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Urdu

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Portuguese

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