

# Sustainability Appraisal





## A. Introduction

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8.1 The 'Sustainability Appraisal' of the Devon Structure Plan 2001 to 2016 Deposit Draft was set out in a separate document. The main elements of the appraisal were:

- 1) the **Scoping of relevant Government Guidance** to ensure that the Plan covers all current Government guidance on development plan content
- 2) the **Assessment of the proposed policies against the aims** of the Structure Plan as set out in Chapter 2
- 3) the **Appraisal of the new and revised policies and proposals** to establish their effects in sustainability terms.

**Photo - cover of Sustainability Appraisal**

## B. Sustainable Development

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8.2 The concept of sustainable development is important for land use planning and it is crucial that the concept is integrated into the Devon Structure Plan at every stage.

8.3 The following list indicates the main sustainability objectives and assessment criteria against which the Structure Plan policies have been judged.

### a) Prudent Use of Natural Resources

- To reduce consumption of undeveloped land and protect the best and most versatile agricultural land
- To promote re-use and recycling of waste, and reduce mineral consumption
- To ensure efficient use of water and energy resources
- To maintain and enhance biodiversity resources

### b) Effective Protection of the Environment

- To maintain and enhance the attractiveness of rural and urban areas
- To improve and maintain good water and air quality and to manage potential effects of climate change
- To maintain and enhance the historic environment and assets of the county
- Promote a pattern of land use that will reduce the need to travel

### c) Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment

- To encourage and accommodate the process of economic change and diversification
- To encourage and accommodate the expansion of population, employment and housing related to infrastructure
- To support and maintain the rural economy

### d) Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone

- To reduce disparities in income, access to jobs, facilities and services within the county
- To protect and improve the quality of life and health of all residents
- To foster sustainable communities and living environment

8.4 The following section provides a brief overview of the key points and findings of the Sustainability Appraisal.

## C. Policy Assessment Against Structure Plan Aims

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8.5 The assessment tested how effectively the individual policies help to deliver the aims of the Structure Plan in sustainability terms. The majority of the policies were found to have an important positive contribution or supporting contribution to meeting the aims of the Structure Plan. No policies were found to have a negative contribution to meeting the Structure Plan aims. In some cases the assessment indicated an uncertain effect dependant on the interpretation/adoption of the policy. It is important that in implementation, opportunities are taken to maximise the positive effects that land use and transportation planning can have in sustainability terms.

### A Sustainable Strategy for Devon

8.6 The concept of sustainable development underlies Policies ST1, ST3 and ST4. These policies acknowledge that there are 'certain key issues' that are of fundamental importance in the move towards a more sustainable future. The sustainability appraisal viewed Policy ST1 as a key principle underlying the Plan.

8.7 It is evident that the Structure Plan is encouraging a mix of compatible development in the provision of housing and employment land. Such interaction of land uses will encourage further economic activity, job creation and ultimately contribute to improved quality of life. The policies successfully seek to ensure that development is provided for in patterns and locations which best meet sustainable development objectives.

### Conservation of Devon's Environment and Resources

8.8 These policies have a strong role in the protection, conservation and enhancement of the natural environment. However, in some cases the policies could be interpreted as restricting some forms of development. In other circumstances, landscape enhancement could make urban and rural areas attractive for investment. Therefore implementation of the conservation policies must maximise the potential to sustain and enhance resources which will contribute to passive and active enjoyment of Devon's environment.

8.9 The appraisal of the revised policy on Aggregate Minerals (MN5) suggested that the use of recycled and secondary minerals as an alternative to new aggregates must be encouraged. The increased use of sustainable and alternative transport modes should be investigated as an alternative to road transport in the mineral extraction industry.

### Transport

8.10 The policies demonstrate that the priority is to encourage development in locations which optimise the potential for more sustainable forms of travel and decrease the need to travel. All new development must seek to encourage and contribute to economic growth and employment opportunities, whilst having regard for protection of the environment. It is equally important that transport policies maximise the potential to meet the communities' needs through improved facilities and services. The policies must ensure that development promotes modal choice accessible to all.

### Shopping, Tourism, Recreation and Leisure

8.11 The priority is to encourage locations of retail, leisure and tourism development which optimise the potential for more sustainable forms of travel and to decrease the need to travel. All new development must seek to encourage and contribute to economic growth and employment opportunities, whilst having regard for the protection of the environment.

## Appraisal Findings

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8.12 The Appraisal highlighted those policy areas that would benefit from improved integration with sustainability objectives.

8.13 The key points arising from the Appraisal were fed in at each stage of the Plan to strengthen the Structure Plan commitment to sustainable development.