



URS led on appraisal work up to 2011, after which it undertook a critical friend role.



## **Bury Council Publication Core Strategy**

# **Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment Non-Technical Summary**

Final Report  
June 2013



*(Source of pictures: [www.Bury.gov.uk](http://www.Bury.gov.uk))*

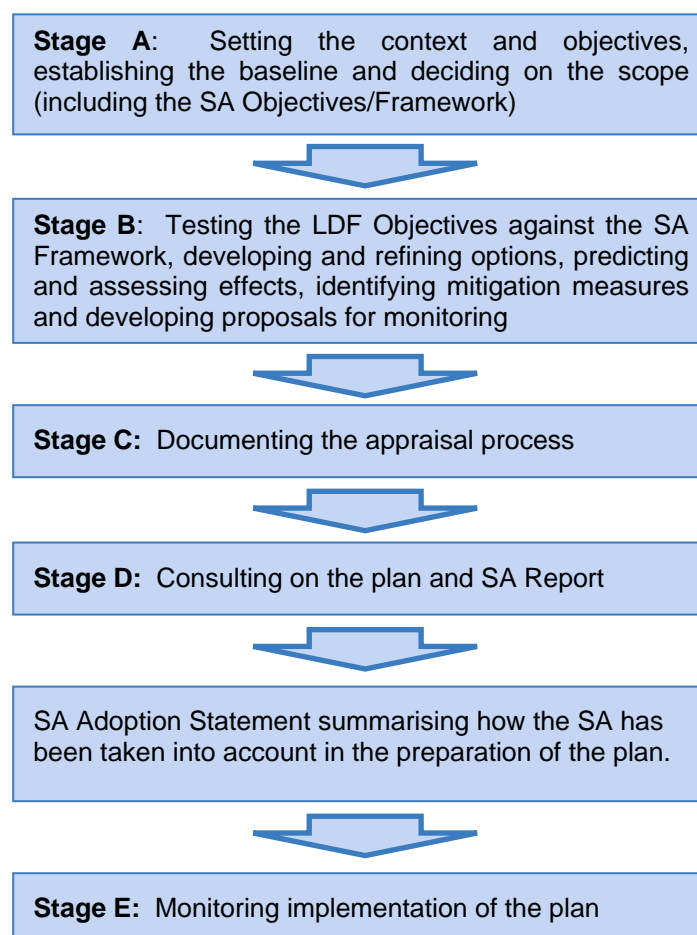
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# 1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is required for all land use plans (including DPDs). The purpose of SA is to promote sustainable development through better integration of sustainability considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans. SA is an integral part of good plan making and should not be seen as a stand alone activity. It is an on-going process that identifies the likely significant effects of the plan and the extent to which implementing the plan will achieve the social, environmental and economic objectives which have been identified as being necessary to achieve 'sustainable development'.
- 1.1.2 The Bury Publication Core Strategy DPD sets out the overall approach which the Council, working with other organisations at the local and sub-regional level, will use to guide and control the future use and development of land.
- 1.1.3 Alongside the development of the DPD, the Council has undertaken a process of SA, which incorporates statutory requirements to undertake Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).
- 1.1.4 A SA follows six key stages, which are outlined in **Figure 1** below. Some of the stages are revisited as the plan develops and begins to take shape, and in response to consultation. This report falls within Stage C of the process.

**Figure 1: Six-Stage Approach to Sustainability Appraisal**



- 1.1.5 The Publication Core Strategy document will eventually become a Core Strategy for the Borough, and as such, is intended to set out and support a long term vision for the development of the Bury area, and a number of strategic objectives which have been identified to meet that vision. Within the Core Strategy, a spatial framework for achieving the vision is set out, along with a series of spatial development policies, which establish the framework for the quantity and broad locations for future growth, investment and regeneration in the Borough. The plan also includes a series of more generic, criteria-based development management policies, which provide a more detailed basis for assessing specific development proposals. The Publication Core Strategy policies are structured around the themes of economy, communities, environment and transport.
- 1.1.6 The full SA report follows a structure that focuses on a series of topic areas. The key sustainability issues and the SA objectives that were identified to address these issues have been divided into a number of topic areas. The following topics are considered:
- Heritage and Landscape;
  - Biodiversity;
  - Water and Land Resources;
  - Climatic Factors and Flooding;
  - Transportation and Air Quality;
  - Social Equality and Community Services;
  - Local Economy and Employment; and
  - Housing.
- 1.1.7 For each topic the assessment sets out to answer the following questions:
- What is the objective of the plan?
  - What is the policy context?
  - What is the situation now?
  - What are the key objectives and other decision making criteria that we need to consider?
  - What will be the situation without the plan?
  - What will be the situation with the plan?
  - How can we mitigate / enhance effects? (SA recommendations)
  - How can we best monitor plan impacts?
- 1.1.8 These questions correspond to the key requirements of the SEA Directive. It is not proposed to set out the detailed findings of the appraisal here, as this information is contained in the full SA report.

## 2 What is the Situation Now?

### 2.1 Policy Context

- 2.1.1 The policy context that the Bury Publication Core Strategy has emerged from is one guided by national planning policy (in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework).
- 2.1.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 27 March 2012. The NPPF is a key part of the Government's reforms to make the planning system less complex and more accessible, to protect the environment and to promote sustainable growth. It replaces previous policy set out in various Planning Policy Statements and Guidance. The NPPF includes a presumption in favour of sustainable development which means that proposals should be approved promptly unless they would compromise the key sustainable development principles set out in the Framework.
- 2.1.3 Until recently the North West RSS provided the regional and sub regional planning context, and provided important policy direction of the Local Authority level, including targets for housing development in the Borough. However, on 20 May 2013 the North West RSS was revoked, and it now falls on individual local authorities to determine appropriate housing and employment targets; but these must be able to meet the tests of soundness in terms of being justified, effective and consistent with national planning policy. Local Authorities must now demonstrate that they have complied with the Duty to Cooperate in preparing their Local Plans, and have worked with neighbouring authorities and other statutory bodies to address strategic priorities across local boundaries.
- 2.1.4 Existing local planning policy and that of neighbouring authorities also informs the preparation of the Core Strategy.
- 2.1.5 Beyond planning policy, other local, sub-regional, regional, national and international policy on issues such as transport, climate change, conservation, health and education also inform the context of, and specific policies within the Core Strategy.

### 2.2 Summary of the Baseline Data

- 2.2.1 The SA Scoping Report for the Bury LDF (initially prepared in 2005 and updated in 2006, 2007 and 2010) sets out the full picture of the current status and performance of the Borough in relation to a number of sustainability issues. The SA report for the Publication Core Strategy cross references the Scoping Report in relation to this baseline information for each individual topic area. A number of key issues emerge from the baseline data that are the most pressing sustainability issues for Bury.
- 2.2.2 Within the Borough, there are a number of areas of heritage value. The twelve Conservation Areas within Bury are predominantly located in the main urban areas of Bury Town Centre, Whitefield, Prestwich and Ramsbottom. There are also four Ancient Monuments and 215 Listed Buildings. These heritage features are subject to development pressure which is likely to be concentrated in these same urban areas.
- 2.2.3 Around 60% of the Borough is classed as open land, with the majority of this being designated as Green Belt. Although the Borough does not include any landscapes of national importance, there are a number of distinctive landscape types. The only Site of Scientific Importance (SSSI) is Ash Clough on the Boundary between Bury and Bolton. There are also 50 Sites of Biological Importance throughout Bury. These sites are Bury's best for flora and fauna. The intrinsic

- values of these sites are likely to be threatened by new development unless these impacts are appropriately accounted for.
- 2.2.4 There are a number of species present within the Borough that are protected by European and National legislation, including Great Crested Newts, Bats and Badgers. There are also a number of wildlife corridors and links within the Borough. These habitats and the species they support are likely to be threatened by new development within the Borough unless these impacts are appropriately managed.
- 2.2.5 The Environment Agency's River Basin Management Plan (December 2009) identifies the existing ecological status of the Irwell and its tributaries in the Borough as mostly 'moderate', the chemical status of the Irwell and Roch upstream of Bury Waste Water Treatment Works to be 'good' (although the Prestwich Clough's are 'failing to achieve good') and the chemical status of the Borough's groundwater as 'poor'.
- 2.2.6 The target for new dwellings on previously developed land in Bury was set in the North West RSS at 80%. Every year since 2003/04 this target has been exceeded, with 98% of new and converted dwellings built in 2011/12 being built on previously developed land. Recycling and composting rates were 34.2% and total waste arisings fell by 5.5% during 2011/12. The Council has recently introduced a new managed waste collection service which is achieving increased rates of recycling. The long term trends indicate an increase in recycling and composting of waste, but that eventually a ceiling will be reached beyond which further recycling/compositing will not be possible, and additional waste treatment facilities will be required.
- 2.2.7 Within Bury domestic emissions per capita are one of the highest in Greater Manchester and account for one third of direct carbon emissions. The areas identified as being most at risk of flooding within the Borough include Ramsbottom, areas to the west of Bury Town Centre and between Bury and Radcliffe, although in Ramsbottom there are flood defences that help manage the risk. The key sustainability issues in relation to flooding are the need to manage flood risk from all sources and the need to increase flood risk mitigation and adaptation, taking into account the uncertainties that arise due to projected climate change.
- 2.2.8 The Borough currently experiences a high level of out-commuting with a significant number of the Borough's residents travelling to work by private motor vehicle, and use of public transport throughout the Borough is low. There is a need to contribute towards ensuring alternatives to the car are attractive and reliable, particularly for residents who live in the north of the Borough. There is also an issue in some areas of the Borough in relation to air quality, as recognised standards are not being met.
- 2.2.9 East Bury, inner Radcliffe, the Besses area of Whitefield and the Rainsough area of Prestwich currently suffer from high levels of multiple deprivation. There is a need to tackle income deprivation and increase life expectancy across the Borough. An ageing population is also a key sustainability issue.
- 2.2.10 The Borough is characterised by low quality and low paid employment and low job density. Employment deprivation is a key issue in some areas of the Borough, particularly in Bury East and Radcliffe and the Brandlesholme Estate in Bury West. Statistics indicate a forecast decline in manufacturing employment and rising levels of worklessness in the Borough. There is also a limited supply of employment land within the Borough, which has led to significant pressure to redevelop existing employment land and premises.
- 2.2.11 There is a need to accommodate future housing requirements including the need for special needs housing, social rented accommodation and intermediate affordable housing across the Borough. There is also a need to support and locate new development in locations which reduce reliance on the private car and minimise the distance people have to travel, and to

ensure equality of access to housing, employment and services through an integrated public transport network.

## 2.3 What will the Situation be without the Plan?

- 2.3.1 There is potential for negative impacts on the Borough's environment in the future if new development is not managed appropriately. In addition, without a new direction, the Borough's social and economic problems will only be exacerbated and with that will come greater social inequality.
- 2.3.2 The existing planning policy for the Borough (the "saved" Unitary Development Plan) provides a range of policies that govern development in the Borough. However, these policies are likely to become out of date in the future as changes influence development in the Borough (e.g. demographic change, climate change, and new government policy in the form of the NPPF). The 'saved' Unitary Development Plan policies will therefore not provide an adequate basis for guiding new development in the future.
- 2.3.3 In the absence of an up-to-date plan, the NPPF will become the main source of planning policy in this regard. Where the development plan is out of date, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh any benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF as a whole, or where specific policies in the NPPF indicate development should be restricted. The NPPF states that relevant policies in existing plans adopted prior to 2004 i.e. the saved UDP policies, should be given due weight according to the degree of consistency with the NPPF.
- 2.3.4 Reliance on the NPPF will leave the Borough without a spatial strategy or policies to address local issues. Without an up-to-date framework to manage new development and land use, Bury is likely to become less attractive as a place to live and work.
- 2.3.5 In summary, it is clear that it would be unsustainable to move forward without a new planning framework for the Borough and the move to establish such a framework through the Core Strategy is welcomed.

### **3 What has plan-making / SA involved up to this point?**

#### **3.1 Background**

3.1.1 It is a legislative requirement that every Sustainability Appraisal process includes an appraisal of 'reasonable alternatives' prior to preparation of the draft plan. The SA Report published alongside the draft Plan (i.e. this report) must then present the appraisal of alternatives and 'tell the story' of how consideration of alternatives has informed development of the draft plan. As such, Chapter 5 of the SA Report presents a consideration of alternatives for the following key plan issues, whilst the Appendices to the SA Report present appraisal findings in full.

- What targets should be set for housing development?
- Where should housing development take place?
- How much employment land is needed?
- Where should employment development take place?
- How do we address the need to improve the quality of the employment land supply?

## 4 What will the Situation be with the Plan?

### 4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 A detailed discussion of the predicted sustainability effects of the Publication Core Strategy Document can be found in sections 7.5, 8.5, 9.5, 10.5, 11.5, 12.5, 13.5 and 14.5 of the SA report. This answers the question 'What will the situation be under the Publication Core Strategy?' for each of the sustainability topics, and these effects are summarised in Chapter 15 of the SA report. The following discussion provides a brief overview of these effects.

4.1.2 Considering all the Core Strategy Policies together, the overall picture is generally positive.

### 4.2 Spatial and Cumulative Effects of the Publication Core Strategy

4.2.1 Cumulative effects will reflect the spatial effects. Where most new development is located, there is most chance of a cumulative effect on the social, environmental and economic receptors in that area and the surrounding area. Cumulatively, the measures proposed throughout the Core Strategy will contribute towards a sustainable transport system, increased education opportunities, increased economic activity, greater housing choice, enhanced community facilities and a sustainable built and natural environment, all of which has a positive impact on all of the SA objectives.

4.2.2 The major urban areas within the Borough include Bury Town Centre, Radcliffe, Prestwich and Ramsbottom. The majority of proposed new development under the Publication Core Strategy policies will be directed to, and take place within these urban areas. It is therefore not surprising that these towns will also attract the most significant impacts in relation to all the topic areas considered, almost without exception.

### 4.3 The Significant Direct and Indirect Effects of the Publication Core Strategy on the Sustainability Topics

#### Heritage and Landscape

4.3.1 The impact of the Core Strategy upon the heritage and landscape sustainability objectives is considered to be very positive. Policies SF1 (Bury's Spatial Framework), EN13 (Built Heritage Assets and Landscape Character Areas) and EN14 (Conserving and Enhancing the Borough's Built Heritage and Landscape Character) are particularly important in relation to the heritage and landscape topic area. The Core Strategy will have a positive impact on the continued development of a Green Infrastructure Network within Bury.

4.3.2 Development in the vicinity of areas of heritage and landscape value could have negative secondary effects on these sensitive areas, through the indirect effects caused by additional traffic / congestion and reduction in air quality (pollutants can cause damage to building structures). Furthermore, any negative effect due to extreme climatic events or flooding may pose an increased risk to heritage and landscape assets within Bury.

#### Biodiversity

4.3.3 Aside from the direct effects that new development can have on biodiversity, the effects it has on other factors such as increased transportation, reduced air quality, reduced water quality, loss of land resources, impact on climate change and overcrowding of open space can all have

- negative secondary or indirect effects on biodiversity, through impacts on their habitats, wildlife corridors or specific species.
- 4.3.4 In relation to the effects of the proposed policies within the Second Draft Publication Core Strategy, most of the above factors that result in secondary effects on biodiversity are addressed.
- 4.3.5 Policies EN5, EN6 and EN18 will have a positive effect on ensuring that sites of biodiversity value within the Borough are protected and enhanced.

### **Water and Land Resources**

- 4.3.6 Overall, it is considered that the Publication Core Strategy will have a positive impact on water and land resources sustainability objectives in the Borough. A number of the policies direct development towards key urban centres and previously developed land as well as seeking to control pollution, which will have a positive impact on preserving soil resources and geology/geomorphological features.
- 4.3.7 Any negative effects in relation to land resources, climate change and flood risk may have indirect effects on water quality and resources, as land use practices have a subsequent impact on what ends up in the Borough's waterways and groundwater system and how the latter are recharged.
- 4.3.8 There are no predicted significant secondary or indirect effects on land resources arising from the Core Strategy policies, other than the negative relationship between increased development (especially residential development) and land resources, if the waste produced by those new developments is not significantly minimised, re-used or recycled.

### **Climatic Factors and Flooding**

- 4.3.9 The policies in the Publication Core Strategy will have a positive impact on tackling the impacts of climate change, by locating development in sustainable locations, reflecting sustainable design principles, ensuring public transport is promoted, controlling pollution and through developing low/zero carbon infrastructure.
- 4.3.10 Aside from the direct effects that new development can have in terms of contributing to climatic change and flooding, any negative effects in relation to a decrease in air quality (for example through the release of pollutants from industry or an increase in transportation) may have further negative indirect effects although the Core Strategy does include the means to control pollution.

### **Transportation and Air Quality**

- 4.3.11 Generally, the Publication Core Strategy has a positive impact on air quality objectives, mainly via indirect impacts. Some of the policies within the Core Strategy detail the need to locate new development sustainably and promote public transport provision within Bury and control the impact of air pollution, which will have a positive impact on air quality.
- 4.3.12 A number of the policies within the Publication Core Strategy significantly and directly affect transportation in the Borough. All new development has to be accessible and creates changes in transport and movement patterns; therefore any policy proposing new development will have at least a "less significant" effect. Other policies concern transportation, movement and access proposals themselves and will clearly have a "significant" effect.

## **Social Equality and Community Services**

- 4.3.13 The policies within the Core Strategy will have a very positive effect on social equality and community services objectives over the lifetime of the Plan.
- 4.3.14 By promoting development in the most sustainable locations, the Core Strategy will help to safeguard existing services, community and infrastructure provision including healthcare. Focusing growth on well connected areas will negate the need to travel by private vehicle or over long distances to access services.
- 4.3.15 Providing social infrastructure such as basic health and community facilities, sports and open space facilities will help to improve the health of the population and also increase community cohesion. Likewise, those policies that encourage walking, cycling, a reduction in private car use and the creation of green infrastructure are likely to have positive influences on health. Employment land provision will have a balanced distribution allowing for all parts of the Borough to easily access a range of jobs.

## **Local Economy and Employment**

- 4.3.16 The policies within the Core Strategy will have a very positive effect on the local employment and the economy in the Borough over the lifetime of the Plan
- 4.3.17 By improving local job prospects for new and existing residents, the Core Strategy will also help to counteract the level of out-commuting. The provision of better quality local employment opportunities could help tackle the earnings gap between those living in the Borough who are locally employed and those who work outside the Borough. The provision of a wide range of employment opportunities should also have positive indirect effects on the vitality of communities and the sense of wellbeing amongst residents of Bury.

## **Housing**

- 4.3.18 The policies within the Core Strategy will have a very positive effect on housing objectives in the Borough over the lifetime of the Plan.
- 4.3.19 Two of the key challenges facing the Borough relate to meeting the needs of an increasingly ageing population and increasing the supply of affordable housing. The implementation of the Core Strategy will help to ensure that everyone has the opportunity of living in a decent and affordable home and that specific housing needs are met. This in turn will help to reduce social inequalities within the Borough. Limited rural housing opportunities will be provided in some villages on previously-developed land which will help support local services.

## 5 Recommendations

### 5.1 Recommended Mitigation

- The Publication Core Strategy is considered to have positive impacts on all the topic areas which have been appraised. As the strategy has been through a number of sustainability appraisals already, suggested mitigation measures have already been incorporated within the strategy as appropriate.

### 5.2 Recommended Monitoring

5.2.1 A list of potential indicators was put forward in the SA/SEA Scoping Report (initially prepared in 2005 and updated in 2006, 2007 and 2010). This list included those indicators already being monitored by the Council in the Annual Local Plan Monitoring Report, alongside recommendations for further indicators for the Council to consider in response to this SA.

5.2.2 In particular, it is recommended that the following prospective indicators be used to monitor and respond to the significant effects and mitigation identified in this SA Report:

- Number of up-to-date Conservation Area appraisals;
- Grade I and II\* listed buildings at risk of decay;
- Change in areas of populations of biodiversity importance, including (i) change in priority habitats and species by type and (ii) change in areas designated for their intrinsic environmental value including sites of international, national, sub-regional or local significance;
- River water quality;
- CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by sector and per capita emissions;
- Estimated traffic flows for all vehicle types (million vehicle km);
- Number of days per year when air pollution is moderate or high for PM10, CO and NO<sub>2</sub>;
- The proportion of young people (16-24 year olds) in full-time education or employment;
- The proportion of working-age population qualified to a) NVQ2 or equivalent and; b) NVQ4 or equivalent.

5.2.3 The monitoring sections of the SA Report (within each topic chapter) show how these recommended indicators relate to the significant effects and mitigation recommendations observed.

5.2.4 Separately the Council is also responsible for monitoring the Local Plan, and it is expected that the two processes of monitoring can be combined in order to achieve efficiencies.

## 6 The Difference made by this Sustainability Appraisal

- 6.1.1 SA has contributed to plan development by providing an independent assessment of the sustainability of:
- the Council's Stage One and Two issues and options;
  - the resulting Preferred Options;
  - the Draft Publication document;
  - the Second Draft Publication Core Strategy;
  - the Publication Core Strategy
- 6.1.2 The process has therefore provided an ongoing check on the sustainability of the emerging Core Strategy DPD, as envisaged by government guidance. The assessment also identifies likely effects, which should inform more detailed discussions over individual developments and planning applications.
- 6.1.3 An additional benefit of the process is that lessons learned during the SA of the Core Strategy document can inform the SA of other local development documents (DPDs or Supplementary Planning Documents) in the emerging Local Plan.
- 6.1.4 The ultimate effectiveness of the DPD from the point of view of sustainable development will depend on an effective partnership between Bury Council, prospective developers and the community at large.

## 7 Next Steps

- 7.1.1 As an integral part of the development of the Core Strategy, the Council is required to engage the community in the preparation of the plan under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, and on the Publication Version under Regulation 19.
- 7.1.2 Preparation of the Core Strategy has already been through a number of stages during which extensive stakeholder involvement has taken place. At this stage, the intention of issuing this SA Report alongside the Second Draft Publication Core Strategy DPD is to allow for representations to be made on all aspects on the Core Strategy prior to it being formally submitted for Examination.
- 7.1.3 The Council are keen to promote the submission of comments electronically and would encourage anyone with appropriate facilities to make their responses in this way. Responses can be sent by letter, email or using an official comment form, available on request or from the Council's web site. This form is in 'Word' format and you can type in your response and return it as an e-mail attachment to [planning.policy@bury.gov.uk](mailto:planning.policy@bury.gov.uk)
- 7.1.4 Alternatively, letters or completed comment forms can be returned by post to the following address by no later than **13 September 2013**.
- Planning Policy and Projects Section  
Bury Council  
3 Knowsley Place  
Duke Street  
Bury  
BL9 0EJ**
- 7.1.5 Should the DPD undergo any further significant change in the future, including as a result of taking onboard consultation responses, the significant changes will also be subject to further SA.