

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Overton Neighbourhood Plan

*SA Report to accompany
Regulation 14 consultation:
Non-Technical Summary*

February 2015



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1	Non-Technical Summary	Nick Chisholm-Batten Principal Consultant	Steve Smith Technical Director	Steve Smith Technical Director	16 th February 2015

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AECOM Limited
The Crescent Centre
Temple Back
Bristol BS1 6EZ
United Kingdom

Telephone: 0117 917 1200

Fax: 0117 930 0342

What is Sustainability Appraisal?

A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) has been carried out to inform the Overton Neighbourhood Plan. This has incorporated a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process as required by the SEA Regulations. Neighbourhood Groups use SA to assess Neighbourhood Plans against a set of sustainability objectives developed in consultation with interested parties. The purpose of the appraisal is to avoid adverse environmental and socio-economic effects and identify opportunities to improve the environmental quality of Overton and the quality of life of residents through the Neighbourhood Plan.

What is the Overton Neighbourhood Plan?

The Overton Neighbourhood Plan sets out a plan for Overton Parish in the period to 2029. Prepared to be in conformity with the emerging Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan, the ONP sets out a vision, objectives and a range of policies for the Overton area. These relates to a range of topics, including, but not limited to, housing, landscape, the built environment, community services, open space and transport.

The Vision for the ONP is as follows:

- *'To conserve and enhance the things people value most about living in Overton.*
- *To do all in our power to improve the quality of life in the Parish, not only for ourselves but for future generations as well. That means everything we plan to do must be sustainable.*

Above all, we want Overton to remain a village, set in its open landscape. We therefore want to ensure that new housing has the least possible adverse impact on the features we value most, whilst welcoming newcomers to our community.

In 2030 we want Overton to continue to be a place where people of all ages and abilities can thrive, feel safe and be healthy, with opportunities to learn, work, be part of our community, take exercise, enjoy our rural landscape and heritage and lead fulfilling lives.

We want to enhance the village environment and play our part in protecting the global environment.'

It is currently anticipated that the ONP will undergo a referendum later in 2015.

Purpose of this SA Report

This SA Report, which accompanies the current consultation version of the ONP, is the second document to be produced as part of the SA process. The first document was the SA Scoping Report, which includes information about Overton's environment and community.

The purpose of the SA Report is to:

- Identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects of the ONP and alternatives; and
- Provide an opportunity for statutory consultees, interested parties and the public to offer views on any aspect of the SA process which has been carried out to date.

The SA Report contains:

- An outline of the contents and main objectives of the ONP and its relationship with other relevant policies, plans and programmes;
- Relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and key sustainability issues;
- The SA Framework of objectives and appraisal questions against which the ONP has been assessed;
- The appraisal of alternative approaches for the ONP;
- The likely significant effects of the ONP in environmental terms;
- The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects as a result of the ONP; and
- The next steps for the ONP and accompanying SA process.

Assessment of alternative approaches for the ONP

A key requirement of the SEA Regulations is to appraise 'reasonable alternatives' for the ONP. To address this requirement, a number of alternative approaches have been considered in relation to the scale and form of new housing development to be taken forward through the Neighbourhood Plan.

Three sets of options were considered through the SA process as 'reasonable alternatives'. These are described below.

1) Options for number of housing sites

- Option 1: Delivery of the emerging Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan's housing allocation for the Overton area through one site
- Option 2: Delivery of the emerging Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan's housing allocation for the Overton area through multiple sites

2) Options for site packages

Following consultation on these two options in summer 2014, the Steering Group for the ONP viewed that there are some clear advantages in taking an approach which spread development over a wider range of sites considered suitable for allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Three packages of sites, or 'scenarios' were subsequently considered for the purposes of the ONP, as follows:

Scenario A

Site	Number of dwellings
Site F: S of Two Gate Lane	70
Site J: W of Sapley Lane Playing Field	55
Site B: E of Court Drove	14
Site A: NW of Primary School	5
Site WW: Willesley Warren	5
Site AW: Ashe Warren	5
Total	154

Scenario B

Site	Number of dwellings
Site F: S of Two Gate Lane	125
Site B: E of Court Drove	14
Site A: NW of Primary School	5
Site WW: Willesley Warren	5
Site AW: Ashe Warren	5
Total	154

Scenario C

Site	Number of dwellings
Combination of Site J: W of Sapley Lane Playing Field and Site K: W of Pond Close	125
Site B: E of Court Drove	14
Site A: NW of Primary School	5
Site WW: Willesley Warren	5
Site AW: Ashe Warren	5
Total	154

SA findings from the appraisal of these three options were presented (with other information related to the Neighbourhood Plan) at the consultation event undertaken for the ONP in late January 2015.

Responses on the consultation event subsequently highlighted that there was a preference for Scenario A to be taken forward as the spatial strategy for the Neighbourhood Plan.

3) Options for delivering additional housing development in Overton

Due to the current uncertainties relating to the adoption of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan, the ONP Steering Group viewed it would be prudent to consider approaches to delivering housing levels over and above the c.150 houses proposed by the current version of the Local Plan.

To consider this issue in more detail, and provide further sustainability context, the SA process appraised a further two options. These are described below.

Option A seeks to deliver additional housing numbers (an additional 45 dwellings, or a 29% increase on the current figure of 154 dwellings) through a number of 'reserve sites' identified for the Neighbourhood Plan. These sites are as follows:

- Site M: W of Vinn's Lane (30 dwellings)
- Site E: E of Overton Hill Car Park (10 dwellings)
- Site PB: Popham Beacons (5 dwellings)

Option B would deliver additional housing through the current Great North Field proposal. This would comprise an additional 275 dwellings, or a 179% increase on the current figure of 154 dwellings. The 275 dwelling number relates to the current figure which the developer has proposed for the site.

The findings of the appraisal highlighted that, due to allocating a larger number of houses, Option B would support the delivery of a wider range of housing types and help increase affordable housing provision in Overton. The option would also offer increased potential to support the economic viability and vitality of the village and deliver enhanced contributions to community infrastructure. The location of the site close to Overton railway station would also support sustainable transport use.

Option B, due to the significantly higher level of housing provision proposed, has increased potential for impacts on environmental quality locally. This includes through additional effects on biodiversity assets, the historic environment, landscape quality and the quality of the public realm. Whilst the larger scale allocation proposed through Option B increases the potential to deliver new community infrastructure, the significantly higher level of housing provision proposed through the option would place additional pressures on existing community facilities locally. Similarly, whilst the proposed site is located close to Overton railway station, the additional scale and concentration of housing provision through the option has increased potential to contribute to traffic issues in the village.

Appraisal of the current version of the ONP

Utilising the SA Framework of objectives and appraisal questions developed during the earlier scoping stage of the SA, the SA process has appraised the 20 policies put forward through the current version of the ONP. The SA Report has presented the findings of the appraisal through eight sustainability themes, as follows:

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| • Biodiversity | • Population and community |
| • Climate change (including flood risk) | • Health and wellbeing |
| • Land, soil and water resources | • Transportation |
| • Historic environment and landscape | • Economy and enterprise |

The appraisal has concluded that the current version of the ONP is likely to lead to **significant positive effects** in terms of the 'population and community' and 'health and wellbeing' sustainability objectives. These benefits largely relate to the carefully targeted spatial approach proposed by the draft plan, the focus on improving the quality of life of residents in the Neighbourhood Area and the ONP's impetus on protecting and enhancing open space and green infrastructure networks.

In terms of potential negative effects, the development of the greenfield sites proposed through the draft plan will lead to inevitable losses of land classified the Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land. Whilst the ONP has sought to preserve the productivity of some of these areas through promoting allotment provision, residual **significant negative effects** are likely to remain in relation to the 'Land, Soil and Water Resources' sustainability objective.

There are also likely to be inevitable effects on landscape and townscape quality from new areas of development on the edge of Overton village and the three sites proposed elsewhere in the parish. To help address this, the current version of the ONP presents a number of policy interventions which will help limit potential effects and achieve enhancements where possible. Potential effects on views from the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty are also likely to be limited by the small scale of the sites proposed within the AONB and in Overton village. Similarly, in terms of potential effects on the River Test Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), whilst many of the sites are located in relatively close proximity to the SSSI, adverse effects on this nationally designated nature conservation site are likely to be limited by the proposed size of the allocations.

Whilst the draft plan approach will help initiate a range of beneficial approaches in relation to 'climate change', 'biodiversity' and 'historic environment and landscape', these are not considered as significant positive effects as the delivery of the allocations through the ONP will inevitably lead to some adverse effects in relation to these sustainability topics. For these topics therefore, the approach promoted by the current version of the ONP will limit the potential magnitude of adverse effects linked to the delivery of housing allocations in the Neighbourhood Area.

In relation to the 'economy and enterprise' sustainability objective a number of beneficial approaches are put forward by the current version of the plan. This includes relating to a promotion of the parish's visitor economy.

Recommendations for the next stages of development for the ONP

The SA Report presents two recommendations for improving the sustainability performance of the current version of the ONP. These are summarised as follows:

- The next iteration of the ONP should seek to encourage the integration of high levels of sustainability into new housing development in the Neighbourhood Area. This includes relating to energy efficient design, water efficiency, water reuse and the integration of climate-resilience into new development areas.
- The ONP should seek to ensure that all development in and adjacent to the Overton Conservation Area is carried out in conjunction with the Conservation Area Appraisal undertaken for the area.

These recommendations should be considered through the next iteration of plan making for the ONP.

Next steps

Subsequent to the current consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan, the ONP will be updated to reflect comments received. The SA Report will be updated to reflect the changes made to the plan.

The ONP and the updated SA Report will then be submitted to Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council for its consideration. In particular Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council will consider whether the plan is suitable to go forward to Independent Examination in terms of the ONP meeting legal requirements and its compatibility with the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan.

If the subsequent Independent Examination is favourable, the ONP will be subject to a referendum, organised by Basingstoke and Deane Council. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the plan, then it will be passed to Basingstoke and Deane Council with a request it is adopted. Once adopted, the ONP will become part of the Development Plan for Overton.

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