

Cheshire West & Chester Council

Local Plan

Part One: Strategic Policies



Main Modifications

Sustainability Appraisal
September 2014

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Cheshire West
and Chester

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Introduction

The Local Plan (Part One) has been subject to Sustainability Appraisal (SA), incorporating the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (SEA). Sustainability Appraisal is a statutory requirement for Development Plan Documents as set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The Sustainability Appraisal has been an iterative process which has informed the development of the Plan.

Following the Examination Hearings into the Local Plan (Part One), the Inspector has identified a number of main modifications which are required to address matters of soundness. The Inspector has requested that these modifications are subject to Sustainability Appraisal. The SA of the main modifications has sought to identify the potential sustainability effects which could arise through taking forward the modifications. It has taken account of sustainability effects already identified through the SA of the Submission Local Plan, and has considered whether the modifications would result in any significant changes to those effects already identified, either positive or negative.

This document should be read alongside the Schedule of Main Modifications (September 2014). Reference should also be made to the Sustainability Appraisal Report of the Submission Local Plan (December 2013) which sets out in detail the methodology used for the SA and the findings of the appraisal of the Submission Local Plan.

Summary of Findings

The outcome of the SA of main modifications has been to show that the modifications do not raise any significant sustainability effects, over and above those already identified. Many of the modifications are wording changes which improve the clarity of the plan but do not raise further issues in terms of significant sustainability effects.

In some cases there could be an enhanced positive impact for specific sustainability objectives - policies STRAT3 Chester and ENV7 Alternative Energy Supplies. For policy STRAT1, the previously identified positive impact could be reduced. In general however, the modifications are unlikely to result in significant change in identified effects.

An overview of the sustainability implications of each policy modification is set out below. Where changes to the SA of specific policies are identified in this report they are detailed in Appendix 1. This should be read alongside the overview table (page 9) and Appendix A of the Sustainability Appraisal of the Submission Local Plan (December 2013).

MM1 - STRAT 1 Sustainable Development

Modification summary – change to the policy wording to delete prescribed distance in relation to accessibility to services. Deletion of requirement to prioritise the use and redevelopment of previously developed land.

The change to the policy wording with regard to access to services does not raise any additional sustainability issues. SA objective 1 relates to the need to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change, one of the sub-objectives aims to ensure new development is in accessible locations to reduce car based travel and sustainable forms of transport. The main modification which deletes the prescribed distance of the location of new housing being 1.6km (1 mile) of services, would not result in a change to the appraisal for this specific objective as the modification continues to ensure new housing has good accessibility to services.

The SA objective 9 is to optimise the re-use of previously developed land and buildings. This objective falls within the Land and Resources topic within the SA Report. In the SA Report, Policy STRAT 1 was assessed as having a 'very positive' sustainability effect, reflecting its requirements for prudent use of natural resources. The requirement to prioritise and encourage use of previously developed land contributed to this score. The SA Report takes a 'whole plan' approach to identifying and mitigating impacts. The very positive score for policy STRAT1 in relation to land and resources objective provides mitigation for other policies which have a potentially negative impact on this objective.

The modified policy would still encourage the use and redevelopment of previously developed land, but it would no longer be prioritised. The impact of this change in relation to the SA would mean that in relation to Land and Resources objective policy STRAT1 would score less positively. Overall however, STRAT 1 still scores positively for this objective.

MM2 – STRAT 2 Strategic development

Modification summary – amend the reference to the housing and employment requirement from 'in the region of' to 'at least' 22,000 dwellings and 365ha. (amended from 300ha). Clarification of the approach relating to Local Service Centres.

Amending the housing and employment requirement from 'in the region of' to a minimum figure is not considered to have any significant sustainability impacts, over and above those already identified. This modification is unlikely to result in significantly increased development on greenfield land due to the restraining factors included within other policies, particularly through policy STRAT9 Green Belt and Countryside. Clarification is provided through MM8 that settlement boundaries will be identified around urban areas, key service centres and local service centres, outside of which development will be restricted. Housing requirements could be exceeded within the main urban areas and larger rural settlements, but such levels of development are unlikely to be so significant that they would result in sustainability impacts over and above those already identified through the SA process.

This assessment of SA implications also applies to similar modifications to the housing requirement figures in area specific policies STRAT3 (Chester), STRAT4 (Ellesmere Port), STRAT5 (Northwich), STRAT6 (Winsford) and STRAT8 (Rural).

The SA Report of the Submission Local Plan (December 2013) takes account of the baseline evidence in the Employment Land Study Update 2013, and is included within Chapter 17 on Economic Development under the 'situation now' (paragraph 17.5). The Main Modifications to the Local Plan clarify the employment land completions 2010-2013 in line with the evidence base and would not result in any change to the sustainability effects identified.

The clarification of the approach to Local Service Centres does not result in any changes to previous SA findings.

MM3 – STRAT 3 Chester

Modification summary – amend the reference to the housing requirement from 'in the region of' to 'at least' 5,200 dwellings. Clarification that development on the edge of the urban area should be compatible with the conservation or enhancement of the character and setting of the city.

Please refer to the analysis of modification MM2 on the impact of the housing and employment requirement becoming a minimum figure.

The second part of MM3, relating to protection of the character and setting of the city, would result in policy STRAT3 scoring slightly more positively in relation to the cultural heritage and landscape SA topic, but the impact overall is not significant.

MM4 – STRAT 4 Ellesmere Port

Modification summary – amend the reference to the housing requirement from 'in the region of' to 'at least' 4,800 dwellings. Increase the number of dwellings to be provided at land at Ledsham Road from 1,500 to 2,000. Delete reference to the Waterfront/Ellesmere Quays site from the policy. The policy wording is amended to clarify information on key sites. Bullet A: New Bridge Road site area is removed from policy text and Annex 2 of the Main Modifications amends the policies map, to remove the New Bridge Road allocation from policy STRAT4. Bullet C: Clarifies Ince Park as a multi-modal resource recovery park and energy from waste facility. Explanatory text is amended in relation to flood risk assessments.

Please refer to the analysis of modification MM2 on the impact of the housing and employment requirement becoming a minimum figure.

The increase in dwellings at Ledsham Road is unlikely to raise any additional sustainability impacts over and above those already identified. The previous SA undertook a high level appraisal of the principle of development of the site, which was not based on any specific housing figure. It identifies that there is likely to be a significant beneficial effect against the housing objective. Negative effects were identified for a number of SA topics (such as the SA objectives for climate change and air), which would need to be mitigated through the implementation of other local plan policies at the detailed design

stage. Consideration of planning applications for both 1500 and 2000 units has shown that most of the negative impacts can be mitigated through the design and layout of the scheme and the provision of appropriate infrastructure, on and off site. One of the most significant impacts that cannot be mitigated is the loss of greenfield, high quality agricultural land. The SA already identifies a potential negative effect against the land and resources objective. A higher number of houses on the site would result in an increased density but would not increase the overall development area. As such, the modification would result in a more efficient use of land, although the impact of development would still be negative in terms of the SA land and resources objective.

The Waterfront/Ellesmere Quays site has been deleted as an allocation from the Local Plan (Part One) as it is no longer available for residential development. The allocation was subject to SA and scored positively against the housing, land & resources objectives and economic development. The site would have contributed to meeting local housing needs but other sites in the area will be able to meet the requirement identified in STRAT 4. The assessment against the other SA objectives was largely based on impacts arising from future residential use and these are no longer relevant as the site will remain an employment site. The site can be assessed through the Local Plan (Part Two) and subject to SA as part of that process. It is considered that the change does not introduce significant sustainability effects.

The Main Modifications in relation to the New Bridge Road site are necessary to clarify the policy approach in the context of saved Local Plan policies and Local Plan (Part Two). The area remains a regeneration priority and as such there would be no significant amendments to the SA of the submission plan. The policy identifies a significant positive effect under the economic development objective, and this would remain unchanged as a result of the modifications.

The Main Modifications in relation to Ince Park provide further clarification on the multi-modal nature and uses of the site. This was already considered in the appraisal of the site within the context of Policy ENV8 and the planning consent. As such there are no amendments to the sustainability effects identified in the SA of the Submission Local Plan.

The explanatory text is amended to clarify the requirement for additional Flood Risk Assessments. This would not result in any change to the SA under the water objective.

MM5 – STRAT 5 Northwich

Modification summary – amend the reference to the housing requirement from ‘in the region of’ to ‘at least’ 4,300 dwellings.

Please refer to the analysis of modification MM2 on the impact of the housing and employment requirement becoming a minimum figure.

MM6 – STRAT 6 Winsford

Modification summary – amend the reference to the housing requirement from ‘in the region of’ to ‘at least’ 3,500 dwellings. Clarification on the numbers of dwellings to be provided at the Station Quarter during the plan period.

Please refer to the analysis of modification MM2 on the impact of the housing and employment requirement becoming a minimum figure.

No additional sustainability impacts would result from changes to the remainder of the policy.

MM7 – STRAT 8 Rural

Modification summary – amend the reference to the housing requirement from ‘in the region of’ to ‘at least’ 4,200 dwellings; amend reference to the employment requirement from ‘in the region of’ to ‘at least’ 10ha. Clarification that key service centres will form the focus for development in the rural area. Clarification of the approach to local service centres. Amend the reference to the housing requirement from ‘in the region of’ to ‘at least’ 4,200.

Please refer to the analysis of modification MM2 on the impact of the housing and employment requirement becoming a minimum figure.

The Main Modification clarifies that the employment land requirement is a minimum figure and is not considered to have a significant impact on the findings of the Submission plan SA. The proposed wording provides clarification in line with the baseline evidence in the Employment Land Study Update 2013. Whilst the target will still apply to the whole rural area the potential scale of new development land is likely to be restrained by other aspects of this policy, and unlikely to be significantly over the figure assessed. The SA already identifies a positive beneficial effect under the SA objectives for Economic Development.

The modifications relating to the approach to key and local service centres are clarifications to policy and do not introduce additional sustainability effects, and are covered under Policy STRAT9.

MM8 – STRAT 9 Green Belt and countryside

Modifications to the explanatory text relating to the approach to local service centres and the designation of settlement boundaries.

These text changes are for clarification of policy and do not raise any additional sustainability implications.

MM9 – ECON 1 Economic growth, employment and enterprise

Modification summary – specify that redevelopment of existing employment sites to non-employment uses will be permitted where the proposed use is compatible with existing retained employment uses in the locality.

This modification does not raise any additional sustainability implications over and above those previously identified. The SA of the submission Local Plan already identifies the policy as having a significant beneficial effect against the economic development SA objectives. As the proposed modification continues to support retained employment uses there would be no further change to the appraisal.

MM10 - ECON 2 Town centres

Modification summary – identify Northgate and Barons Quay schemes on the policies map. Delete reference to design requirements for a new food store in Winsford. Amend requirement for impact assessments in development proposals of greater than 1,000 m² gross floorspace in Chester.

This modification does not raise any additional sustainability implications over and above those previously identified. Introducing a lower threshold for retail impact assessments in Chester will continue to support and maintain the vitality and viability of the City centre. The SA of the Submission Local Plan already identifies overall very positive effect against the economic development SA objectives.

MM11 - SOC 1 Delivering affordable housing

Modification summary – change wording from affordable homes ‘must be provided’ to ‘will be sought’... Specify that the Council will seek to maximise the proportion of affordable housing provided up to a target of 30%.

This modification does not raise any additional sustainability implications over and above those previously identified. Policy SOC1 scores positively against the SA objectives for population and human health and housing.

MM12 - SOC 2 Rural exception sites

Modification summary – clarification of approach to the provision of affordable housing and, exceptionally, an element of market housing in rural exception sites.

This modification does not raise any additional sustainability implications over and above those previously identified. Policy SOC2 scores very positively against the SA objectives for population and human health and housing, as the policy provides a clear approach to securing affordable housing to meet identified needs.

MM13 – SOC 4 Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpersons Accommodation

Modification summary – clarify that sites should be located outside the green belt except in very special circumstances.

This modification does not raise any additional sustainability implications over and above those previously identified. The Main Modification only allows for sites to be located in the green belt in very special circumstances in line with national planning policy. The SA of the submission Local Plan already identifies the potential negative effects against the land and resources objective, in relation to any possible Greenfield development. The policy provides clarity that identified needs will be considered further through the Local Plan (Part Two). There would be no change to the appraisal as the policy already scores positively against the SA housing objectives.

MM14 - SOC 6 Open space, sport and recreation

Modification summary – add further clarification on the circumstances when proposals for development on existing areas of open space or recreation will be permitted.

This policy scored positively for most SA topics in the assessment of the Submission Local Plan, reflecting the wide ranging benefits of protecting and enhancing open space. This modification serves to strengthen this protection, further reinforcing the already positive impacts.

MM15 - ENV 1 Flood risk and water management

Modification summary – minor technical wording change to explanatory text

This modification does not raise any additional sustainability implications over and above those previously identified. The modification does not propose any changes to the policy wording, it provides additional explanatory text which would not affect the SA.

MM16 - ENV 5 Historic environment

Modification summary – wording changes to increase the clarity of the policy

This modification does not raise any additional sustainability implications over and above those previously identified. The SA of the submission Local Plan already identifies the policy as having a very positive effect against the SA objectives for cultural heritage and landscape.

MM17 - ENV 7 Alternative energy supplies

Modification summary – to the list of criteria to will be taken into account when considering renewable and low carbon energy proposals, add a new bullet point on biodiversity and the natural and historic environment

Policy ENV7 scored positively in terms of all of the applicable SA topics in the assessment of the Submission Local Plan. The Main Modification includes additional policy criteria specifically on biodiversity, the natural or historical environment. The SA would therefore score more favourably against the SA objective for biodiversity, flora and fauna.

MM18 – ENV8 Managing Waste

Modification summary – additional bullet point requiring regular review through monitoring of sites with planning consent, but not yet operational, to ensure there is sufficient land available to support new waste development in the borough. Wording changes in explanatory text to clarify policy approach and updates to technical data in tables 8.1 and 8.2.

This modification does not raise any additional sustainability implications over and above those previously identified.

MM19 - ENV 9 Minerals supply and safeguarding

Modification summary – minor wording changes to clarify the policy approach to safeguarding mineral resources and associated infrastructure.

This modification does not raise any additional sustainability implications over and above those previously identified.

Annex 4 - Monitoring Framework

The Main Modifications include a framework for monitoring policies within the Local Plan. This identifies that the SA significant effects indicators which measure the likely significant effects of the Plan, will be identified through the Council's Annual Monitoring Reports. This will take account of the SA of the submission Local Plan and will not result in any changes to the SA Report at this stage.

Amendments to the Submission Local Plan - Sustainability Report are indicated with a red border.

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Topic Chapters	Climate Change and Energy	Biodiversity, flora and fauna	Water	Air	Land and Resources	Waste	Cultural Heritage and Landscape	Population and Human Health	Housing	Community Safety	Economic Development
SA Objectives	1, 2	3	4, 5	6	7, 8, 9	10	11, 12	13	14	15	16, 17, 18, 19
SOC 5											
SOC 6											
ENV 1											
ENV 2											
ENV 3											
ENV 4											
ENV 5											
ENV 6											
ENV 7											
ENV 8											
ENV 9											

Key	Significant effects
	Very negative
	Negative
	No impact/screened out
	Positive
	Very Positive

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