



**Doncaster**  
Metropolitan Borough Council

# **Sustainability Appraisal: Non-Technical Summary**

**Doncaster Council Core Strategy 2011 – 2026  
Publication Version**

**July 2011**

# 1. Non-Technical Summary

## Purpose of the appraisal

- 1.1 The Doncaster Local Development Framework (LDF) is being produced by the Council to replace the existing Unitary Development Plan. The Core Strategy is the first document in the Council's suite of documents which make up the Local Development Framework. Documents within the Local Development Framework are referred to as Development Plan Documents (DPDs).
- 1.2 The planning system has recently undergone significant changes and Local Development Frameworks are now replacing the old-style Unitary Development Plans (UDPs). Although the Council has completed the Publication Version of the Core Strategy the statutory development plan remains as the current Unitary Development Plan (adopted July 1998). The saved Unitary Development Plan policies will be gradually replaced as each Development Plan Documents, such as the Core Strategy and Allocations Document, are adopted.
- 1.3 The development of the Core Strategy has been subject to a detailed Sustainability Appraisal (SA) which also complies with European Directive 2001/42/EC the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (SEA Directive). The requirements of the SA and SEA are combined in one process which is embedded within the Council's adopted Scoping Report and will be referred to as SA throughout this report.
- 1.4 The purpose of the SA is to facilitate the production of more sustainable policies. It also highlights the existence of inconsistencies and conflicts between the DPD and the sustainability objectives.
- 1.5 The Core Strategy Revised Preferred Options Consultation Draft was also informed by, and accompanied by, a Scenario Testing document which examined in detail the impact of housing and employment growth and distribution, and also responded to the requirement to undertake a sequential test in relation to flooding. This document has been updated and was made available separately alongside the Core Strategy Publication Version.
- 1.6 An Equalities Impact Assessment and Habitats Regulation Assessment of the Core Strategy have also been produced and reported on separately. Although this Sustainability Appraisal is not intended to act as a formal Health Impact Assessment or Rural Proofing, it does consider many of the relevant issue.

## The SA Report

- 1.7 This report was initially produced alongside the Core Strategy Publication Version and sets out the findings of the final appraisal of the Core Strategy. In doing this, account has been taken of previous appraisal work undertaken including the Council's SA Scoping Report, the SA report on the Core Strategy Options, Preferred Options and Revised Preferred Options. As a result of the Publication stage, a list of proposed minor changes to the Core Strategy has been produced (these include the correction of errors and drafting changes made in the interests of clarity and

accuracy). These changes do not alter the substance of the policies and so it is not considered that Sustainability Appraisal of the changes is required. However, as part of the Publication process the Environment Agency indicated that the sustainability Appraisal report could be improved by referencing the Humber River Basin Management Plan. Also, as further clarity on the national single dataset is now available, the proposed approach to monitoring has been updated. It is not considered that these changes substantially alter the Sustainability Appraisal framework and so the findings of the appraisal remain unchanged.

- 1.8 The Additional Options Addendum to the Revised Preferred Options version of the Core Strategy outlined a series of options for the document which might be altered in light of ongoing changes to national planning policy. This has also been appraised and these options have specifically been considered within this report.
- 1.9 The SA takes account of the aims and requirements of the SA and SEA Directive as identified in the Council's Scoping Report, and is set out as follows:

### **Section 1 – Introduction**

**Section 2 – Broad Approach** Provides an explanation of the approach which has been adopted during the SA process, how the requirements of the SEA Directive have been met, how equalities has been incorporated into the SA process and any difficulties encountered during the assessment.

**Section 3 – Stage A: Scoping** References the first stages in the pre-production of the SA Scoping report and development of the SA. This section also identifies links to other policies and programmes, provides a description of the baseline situation and main social, economic and environmental issues which the appraisal has identified together with a description of the Council's SA framework.

**Section 4 – Stage B: Developing Options and Assessing Effects** In this section, the production of the main strategic options is discussed. The evaluation of these options is discussed and how social, economic and environmental problems were considered in developing the policies as well as how adverse effects can be mitigated and beneficial effects maximised. This section also sets out the approach to monitoring.

**Section 5 – Stage C: Preparing SA Report, D1: Public Participation and Appraisal Changes** This section sets out how the preparation of this SA has assessed the effects of any significant changes resulting from the consultation on the Core Strategy Revised Preferred Options and Options Addendum.

### **Section 6 – Conclusions**

## SA Stages

1.10 There is a strong relationship between the development of Development Plan Document and the key SA stages. This relationship has been identified in the table below.

**Table: Stages of the SA process for Development Plan Documents**

<p><b>DPD Stage 1: Pre-production – Evidence Gathering</b></p> <p><b>SA Stage A:</b> Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding the scope</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A1: Identifying other relevant policies, plans, programmes and sustainability objectives</li> <li>• A2: Collecting baseline information</li> <li>• A3: Identifying sustainability issues and problems</li> <li>• A4: Developing the SA framework</li> <li>• A5: Consulting on the scope of the SA</li> </ul>
<p><b>DPD Stage 2: Production</b></p> <p><b>SA Stage B:</b> Developing and refining options and assessing effects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• B1: Testing the DPD objectives against the SA framework.</li> <li>• B2: Developing the DPD options</li> <li>• B3: Predicting the effects of the DPD</li> <li>• B4: Evaluating the effects of the DPD</li> <li>• B5: Considering ways of mitigating adverse effects and maximising beneficial effects</li> <li>• B6: Proposing measures to monitor the significant effects of implementing the DPDs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Stage C:</b> Preparing the Sustainability Appraisal Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• C1: Preparing the SA Report</li> </ul>
<p><b>Stage D:</b> Consulting on the preferred options of the DPD and SA Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• D1: Public participation on the preferred options of the DPD and SA Report</li> <li>• D2 (i) Appraising significant changes</li> <li>• D2 (ii) Appraising significant changes resulting from representations</li> </ul>
<p><b>DPD Stage 3: Examination</b></p> <p><b>DPD Stage 4: Adoption and Monitoring- making decisions and providing information</b></p>
<p><b>Stage E:</b> Monitoring the significant effects of implementing the DPD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• E1: Finalising aims and methods of monitoring</li> <li>• E2: Responding to adverse effects</li> </ul>

## SA Objectives

1.11 Following consultation with stakeholders the Council has amended the Sustainability Appraisal objectives and the decision making criteria. The new objectives and criteria are enclosed in the table below and have been used to assess the objectives and policies within the Core Strategy Publication Version.

No	Objective	Detailed decision making criteria
1	Employment opportunities available to everyone.	Will the policy help to: 1) Provide opportunities to create jobs? 2) Attract medium sized businesses to the Doncaster borough and grow local supply chains?
2	Conditions which enable business success, economic growth and investment, and a diverse economy.	Will the policy: 1) Make Doncaster more attractive to potential investors/businesses? 2) Support existing businesses?
3	Education and training opportunities which build the skills and capacity of the population.	Will the policy: 1) Improve qualifications and skills in young people? 2) Provide opportunities for adults to learn new skills?
4	Quality housing provided that is available to everyone including vulnerable people, disadvantaged groups and rural communities.	Will the policy: 1) Contribute to the provision of affordable housing which meets local needs, including those of the rural population? 2) Contribute to a mix of uses, tenures and/or house types?
5	Conditions and services which minimise noise, dust, light and air pollution.	Will the policy: 1) Reduce direct pollution? 2) Reduce indirect pollution (e.g. increased traffic)?
6	Safety and security for people and property.	Will the policy: 1) Promote buildings and developments which are 'Secure by Design'? 2) Address anti –social behaviour?
7	Access to culture, leisure and recreation activities will be available to all.	Will the policy: 1) Make it easier for people to have healthy lifestyles? 2) Facilitate access to fit for purpose open space? 3) Increase opportunities to access to the natural environment? 4) Increase opportunities to access to cultural facilities such as museums?
8	Efficient land use patterns that minimise the need to travel and local needs met	Will the policy: 1) Result in new developments being located in accordance with the settlement hierarchy?

No	Objective	Detailed decision making criteria
	locally.	2) Facilitate access to services such as health, education, retail etc (including in rural areas)?
9	An efficient transport network which maximises access and minimises detrimental impacts.	Will the policy: 1) Result in new developments being located in areas served by public transport? 2) Facilitate walking and cycling? 3) Maximise the efficiency and capacity of existing transport infrastructure? 4) Facilitate the transport of freight by canal or rail?
10	Reuse of previously developed sites and buildings.	Will the policy: 1) Provide opportunities for existing buildings to be reused? 2) Provide the opportunities to redevelop existing brownfield or contaminated land? 3) Avoid the use of greenfield sites?
11	An attractive place.	Will the policy positively contribute to: 1) A high quality built environment? 2) The overall townscape? 3) Landscape character?
12	Cultural heritage conserved and enhanced.	Will the policy conserve or enhance those elements which contribute to the significance of designated or non-designated heritage assets and their settings?
13	To protect, enhance and increase the borough's biodiversity and geodiversity.	Will the policy facilitate; 1) The protection and enhancement of designated sites? 2) The protection and enhancement of other non designated features of interest? 3) The creation of new features of biodiversity value?
14	Conservation of soil and minerals resource, including prevention of soil pollution and sterilisation of minerals.	Will the policy: 1) Result in the protection/retention of the Best and Most Versatile agricultural land (Grades 1-3a)? 2) Avoid the sterilisation of mineral resources? 3) Facilitate the use of recycled rather than primary aggregates?
15	Quality and quantity of groundwater, ponds, lakes and water courses conserved and enhanced in accordance with the Water Directive Framework.	Will the policy: 1) Increase the quality and quantity of the water environment? 2) Reduce direct or indirect pollution of the water environment?
16	Greenhouse gas emissions	Will the policy:

No	Objective	Detailed decision making criteria
	minimised and a managed response to the effects of climate change.	1) Result in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions? 2) Result in development that is able to withstand the effects of climate change?
17	Flood risk minimised.	Will the policy: 1) Help to address the flood risk of existing properties? 2) Help to avoid development within flood zones 2 and 3? 3) Ensure that where development in flood zones 2 and 3 is necessary that the flood risk will be addressed?
18	Prudent and efficient use of energy and natural resources (including water) by developments without unnecessary production of waste and promotion of both waste minimisation and recycling techniques.	Will the policy reduce the amount of natural resources required in the construction, use and decommissioning of development?
19	Efficient use of physical infrastructure.	Will the policy: 1) Support proposals within the capacity of existing infrastructure? Or; 2) Where there is no existing capacity will the policy facilitate the development of new sustainable infrastructure for the benefit of the borough?
20	Protect, enhance and increase green infrastructure within the borough.	Will the policy: 1) Protect the borough's green infrastructure? 2) Enhance the borough's green infrastructure? 3) Facilitate the creation of new green infrastructure which will improve links and corridors between open space?

## Core Strategy Objectives

1.12 Since the Further Options stage of the Core Strategy the plan objectives have been changed to reflect the new Borough Strategy. The change to the Core Strategy objectives has resulted in a new appraisal of the Core Strategy Objectives. The results of the appraisal have identified that the all the Core Strategy Objectives are compatible, and in most cases, support the Sustainability Appraisal Objectives. In some cases, the SA Objectives are supported by multiple Core Strategy Objectives.

## How SA has informed each iteration of the Core Strategy

1.13 **Core Strategy Issues and Options 2005.** The original Core Strategy Preferred Options document published in 2005 was the first version of the Core Strategy. This document was subject to SA in December 2005 by Land Use Consultants. The SA comprised of a number of iterations. The first of those iterations involved the

appraisal of the Core Strategy Objectives, and was included in the Council's SA Scoping Report published in 2005 (updated August 2007). This appraisal highlighted elements of the objectives which were clearly sustainable and should be maintained. It also highlighted tensions between some of the Core Strategy objectives. The second iteration produced in May 2005 was the appraisal of Strategic Options. This appraisal informed the selection of the preferred policy options which were included in the Preferred Options for the Core Strategy. The appraisal suggested that these tensions needed to be considered in the development of appropriate Development Plan policies.

- 1.14 **Core Strategy Preferred Options 2005.** The third iteration of the SA involved an appraisal of the preferred options, which Land Use Consultants undertook in December 2005. The appraisal demonstrated both the negative and positive effects of implementing the plan.
- 1.15 **Core Strategy Further Options 2007.** Following the publication of the first version of the Core Strategy Preferred Options in 2005, a series of further options were developed in relation to new guidance, legislation (Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing) and the results of the consultation process. This document was called the Further Options and was also subject to an Interim Sustainability Appraisal by Land Use Consultants, which built upon the existing appraisal work carried out in 2005 at the Preferred Options stage. The recommendations made from the Further Options stage (alongside those from the Preferred Options stage) helped to improve and shape the Core Strategy Revised Preferred Options in 2010. There has been considerable dialogue throughout the SA process between the SA officers and Council Policy officers during the preparation of the Core Strategy. Many of the previous recommendations made by external consultants (Land Use Consultants) have been taken on board and were reflected in the Core Strategy Revised Preferred Options Consultation Draft. However, in some instances, officers have not been able to respond to all of the suggestions because of the desire to achieve certain outcomes such as economic regeneration and tackling deprivation. Land Use Consultants have fully acknowledged in previous appraisals that there can be tensions between sustainability priorities and the choices that have to be made that will not always satisfy all the SA objectives.
- 1.16 **The Core Strategy Revised Preferred Options 2010** The Core Strategy Revised Preferred Options Consultation Draft set out the Council's preferred option and was appraised by council officers in August and September 2010. The document was prepared to take account of the complex issues and challenges facing the borough (including dispersed patterns of coalfield deprivation, flood risk, biodiversity and landscape character) and to reflect national, regional and local policy. The Core Strategy Revised Preferred Options Consultation Draft was found to be a much improved and more sustainable document in comparison to earlier versions of the strategy. Each policy was individually appraised against the SA Objectives. The resulting tables were included in the SA report which accompanied the Revised Preferred Options consultation. These tables have since been updated to reflect the updated SA Objectives and the changes made to the document to produce the Publication Version. The document was also informed by, and accompanied by, a Scenario Testing document which examined in detail the impact of housing and

employment growth and distribution, and also responded to the requirement to undertake a sequential test in relation to flooding. This document has been updated and is available separately alongside the Core Strategy Publication Version.

- 1.17 Consultation on development of the Core Strategy has involved a wide range of interested parties including the public, local councillors, business interests, statutory bodies, Parish and Town Councils, the Mayor of Doncaster and a wide range of council officers.
- 1.18 The Core Strategy Revised Preferred Options Consultation Draft has responded to this community feedback and to the SA. Whilst the main thrust of the document and the settlement strategy is broadly the same as in the previous Core Strategy Preferred Options consulted on in 2005/2007 a lot more detail has been added to it. This includes housing numbers and locations, broad employment land quantities, an affordable housing policy and a green infrastructure policy.
- 1.19 The 'Vision for Settlements and Communities' section was also greatly improved and includes much more detail, drawing together the strategy and policy in housing, employment, transport and environment to articulate more clearly what level of growth is expected for different communities in different areas.
- 1.20 A dedicated implementation section has been added, ensuring that the implementation of the strategy is measured and key infrastructure is delivered. In addition, it also sets out how the policies provide flexibility, and what remedial action may be appropriate if targets are not met.
- 1.21 It has taken account of important new and updated evidence, particularly: Updated Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, Economic Strategy, Logistics Study and Aviation Strategy, Strategic Housing Land Availability Review and an Updated Employment Land Review.
- 1.22 It has also taken account of the revised Borough Strategy (2010) and builds upon this vision by setting out several detailed priorities.
- 1.23 **Options Addendum Consultation** . Following the governments revocation of the Regional Spatial Strategy in July 2010 it was decided that an Options Addendum should be produced for the Core Strategy Revised Preferred Options. The purpose for this was to establish the relative merits of abolishing the Regional Spatial Strategy and the targets contained therein. Therefore, the options addendum was produced to examine the merits of generating options on the policies contained in the Regional Spatial Strategy specifically, housing numbers, distribution strategy, the phased release of housing sites and renewable energy targets.
- 1.24 These policy options have now been subjected to a Sustainability Appraisal (using the new Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal Objectives). As this SA report was not included in the material made available as part of the public consultation over the summer (due to timescale constraints) it was subject to its own consultation from January – February 2011. This appraisal confirmed that the approach which Doncaster has taken to the Regional Spatial Strategy, was in fact the correct approach and the most sustainable.

1.25 In order to satisfy the SEA Directive and Act, the Core Strategy will need to be monitored. The Directive requires the “significant environmental effects of implementing the plan to be monitored”. For the purposes of the Core Strategy and SA, the Council’s Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) will be used to keep the Local Development Framework policies under review to ensure that it is meeting the necessary guidance and SA objectives.

### **Key Issues from the Revised Preferred Options Consultation**

1.26 Following the public consultation of the Revised Preferred Options of the Core Strategy some key issues were identified. These issues can be summarised as:

- Delivery of Finningley and Rossington Regeneration Route Scheme
- Hatfield/Stainforth and approach to DN7
- Employment Numbers and Sectors
- Housing Numbers
- Housing Mix and Affordable Housing
- Design and Sustainable Construction
- Countryside and Flooding
- Protecting the Built and Natural Environment

1.27 These key issues were discussed at a LDF workshop held on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2010. Representatives invited to the workshop included all Ward Councillors, Members of the Enterprising Doncaster Board and some key representatives from the house building industry. The workshop debated how we can deliver our priorities under the current political and economic climate, focusing on the main areas highlighted by the consultation.

1.28 Following the workshop, recommendations were made through the Council’s approval process and these changes were incorporated within the Publication Version of the Core Strategy and the policies of the Core Strategy were appraised.

### **Appraisal of the Core Strategy Publication Version**

1.29 Each of the policies within the Core Strategy were appraised at the Revised Preferred Options Stage and these individual appraisals were updated for the Publication SA. This was to take account of the updated SA Objectives and changes to the policies following consultation. It is the finding of this final SA that the Core Strategy is overall a sustainable plan. The Core Strategy has been subjected to the Sustainability Appraisal process throughout its entire development (including versions, some of which have not been published) hence many of the negative issues and or impacts have been addressed in earlier stages of the plan’s development.

### **Summary of the findings**

1.30 The document will ensure that development is carried out in a sustainable way whilst still allowing the plan to deliver its economic objectives for the borough, and wider region. The appraisal has identified that on the whole, the effects of the Core

Strategy over the long term will be mainly positive with some negative effects which will need to be mitigated over the plan period. However, it is difficult to say at this stage, what the full range of cumulative effects will be and more information will become available as and when lower tier plans are implemented and the policies within the plan are monitored through the Annual Monitoring Report.

- 1.31 At this stage it is unrealistic to assume that the level of growth proposed will not have some environmental impact at some stage within the plan period. Clearly, some impacts may be temporary as sites are developed and mitigation is implemented and as technologies change. Some impacts may be permanent (e.g. the loss of agricultural land to major development). It is important therefore, to take a balanced view considering all the tensions which exist between economic growth, environmental protection and social deprivation.
- 1.32 The greatest challenge which this appraisal has had to address is how to predict, and quantify, the impacts of climate change considering that climate change is a global event and is 'the greatest long-term challenge facing the world today (Planning Policy Statement 1). Government guidance makes it clear, that planning has a fundamental and important role to play in delivering sustainable development and tackling climate change. However, it is difficult at this stage of the LDF to predict what the full impact of Policy 6 (Robin Hood Airport and Business Park) will be. The Coalition Government regards aviation as a key driver in securing economic growth and recognises the role of Britain's regional airports. The proposed growth of the airport is aimed at supporting the wider Sheffield City Region economy. It is important to recognise that the airport will create impacts associated with aviation (increase in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions), however this must be considered in a wider context at a regional/national level and the associated benefits of reducing vehicular travel to other regions airports.
- 1.33 Taking this into consideration, the sustainability appraisal process of the Core Strategy can robustly demonstrate that climate change has been taken into account at every opportunity to ensure that the policies contained within the strategy address, consider and where possible influence those types of development which contribute to climate change and its associated impacts (air quality, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, flooding, loss of biodiversity) by ensuring that:
- New development both residential and business is energy efficient (Code for Sustainable Homes and BREEAM)
  - Encouraging the development of renewable energy sources
  - Reductions in the amount of energy consumed by transport by locating development near public transport and local services
  - Protecting, enhancing the natural environment and allowing biodiversity to adapt to climate change through green corridors and green infrastructure
  - Reductions in the amount of emissions generated by development
- 1.34 Significantly, the work on the Core Strategy and SA has made sure that climate change is embedded throughout the policies of the plan. This approach should

further the deliverability of the plan towards reducing carbon emissions. It is considered on balance, that the broad strategic nature of the Core Strategy has gone as far as it can at this stage (using the broad strategic approach) to tackle climate change. The document sets the direction and principles for the lower tier plans, such as the Allocations DPD and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) and these documents are considered to be the most appropriate means of considering measures to tackle climate change as it is these documents that facilitate actual development.