

# North York Moors Local Plan

## Sustainability Appraisal Statement.

This document is the Sustainability Appraisal Statement. Sustainability Appraisal aims to promote sustainable development through better integration of sustainability considerations in the preparation and adoption of plans. This document sets out the work carried out to test policies in draft versions of the North York Moors Local Plan 2016-35 against environmental, economic and social objectives. It explains how and why policies have been amended to make sure the new Local Plan helps deliver more sustainable forms of development.

**July 2020**





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# 1. Introduction

- 3.1 The North York Moors National Park Authority adopted a new Local Plan at its National Park Authority meeting on 27 July 2020. It can be found on the Authority's website at [\[link to be inserted\]](#).
- 3.2 Throughout its preparation the Plan has been subject to 'Sustainability Appraisal' (SA) at various stages. SA is a way of checking local plan policies and allocations against a series of economic, social and environmental criteria to see if they are capable of delivering the most sustainable forms of development. SA considers the likely significant effects of an emerging plan, and the reasonable alternatives considered during the plan-making process, in terms of key sustainability issues. Sustainability Appraisal is what is known as an 'iterative' process, in other words it is reapplied at each stage of plan-making to make sure that our plans are heading in the right direction.
- 3.3 Production of an SA is a legal requirement. The Plan must be prepared in line with the requirements of [Statutory Instrument 2004 No. 1633: The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004](#) which transpose into national law European Union Directive 2001/42/EC<sup>1</sup> 'on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment'. A wider 'Sustainability Appraisal' covering non-environmental issues is also required through Government planning guidance<sup>2</sup>. Our appraisal process therefore considers the social and economic effects of the Local Plan in addition to environmental matters.
- 3.4 This Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Statement forms the final output from the SA. Under the terms of Section 16(4) of the regulations quoted above, when a plan is adopted, a statement must be produced summarising:
- How environmental / sustainability considerations have been integrated into the Plan;
  - How the SA report has been taken into account;
  - How opinions expressed in response to consultation on the SA report have been taken into account;
  - How the Local Authority made the relevant documents available;
  - The reasons for choosing the plan as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternative options dealt with; and
  - The measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant sustainability effects of the implementation of the plan or programme.
- 3.5 The remainder of this documents details how the Authority has complied with these requirements. The Sustainability Appraisal was undertaken by the National Park Authority's Policy team in accordance with the regulations and guidance set out for the production of a Local Plan.
- 3.6 Good practice in SEA/SA emphasises the value of integrating the assessment with the plan-making process and the decision to undertake an in house approach to Sustainability Appraisal has enabled the National Park Authority to maintain control of the process ensuring that it is integral and not divorced from the plan making process. The Authority

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<sup>1</sup> European Union, Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment, 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Communities and Local Government, Online National Planning Policy Practice Guidance Paragraph: 005 Reference ID: 11-005-20140306, 2012.

has also been able to develop distinct appraisal criteria that both conforms with and reflects the statutory purposes of the National Park Authority's work.

## 2. How environmental / sustainability considerations have been integrated into the Plan

2.1 The SA (incorporating SEA) has been carried out as an iterative and ongoing process to inform decision making for the developing Local Plan. The SA framework was devised/applied and consulted upon at the following stages:

### The Scoping Stage (Stage 1)

2.2 The first stage, known as the 'Scoping Stage' was published in September 2016. The [Scoping Report](#):

- Reviewed other relevant policies, plans, programmes to establish whether their contents will need to inform the North York Moors National Park Local Plan;
- Looked at what we know about the North York Moors National Park at the moment to see what issues need to be addressed. In sustainability appraisal terms this is known as 'baseline information'. It included 'baseline' information about the environmental, social and economic conditions in the Park which the Local Plan must address.
- Set out the objectives we will be using to carry out this sustainability appraisal and how the appraisal will be carried out;
- Set out how we will start to monitor our eventual Plan to see if it is working.

2.3 In accordance with the statutory requirements the three Strategic Environmental Assessment bodies (Historic England, the Environment Agency and Natural England) were asked for their views, with a deadline of 18 November 2016.

### SA at the Preferred Options Stage (Stage 2)

2.4 As this was the first full draft of the Plan this was the first version of the SA, with subsequent versions amending this main version in light of changes to policies. This [full SA Report](#) was produced in July 2019 and was subject to an eleven week consultation period which ended on 12 October 2018. In accordance with the statutory requirements the three Strategic Environmental Assessment bodies (Historic England, Environment Agency and Natural England) were consulted at the Preferred Options stage and asked for their views.

2.5 This version of the document:

- Explained what sustainability appraisal is and about the preparation process (Section 2)
- Set out the twelve environmental, social and economic objectives that were to be used to appraise the draft plan ([Chapter 4](#)).
- It then assessed whether the separate objectives set out in the draft Local Plan performed well in sustainability terms by assessing those objectives against the objectives used by the sustainability appraisal ([Chapter 5](#));
- Carried out an appraisal of the main spatial strategy proposed in the plan (known as the settlement hierarchy) and looked at some alternative options on how a spatial strategy could be formulated and whether our 'preferred option' performed the best

compared to others when assessed against the sustainability objectives ([Chapter 6](#)). It concluded our preferred option for a spatial strategy was the most sustainable of those tested.

- The appraisal then moved on look at individual policies. Full appraisal tables were included at [Appendix 5](#). No site allocations were tested as the draft plan does not include any relating to new development (apart from a couple of small 'environmental enhancement sites' identified in draft Policy ENV14.)
- Assessment of policies was then handled in two different ways, depending on whether the authors or the draft plan considered that there were alternative options that needed to be generated and considered by testing through the appraisal framework. Article 5(1) of the UE SEA Directive requires that only "reasonable alternatives should be taken into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme, are identified, described and evaluated" A grey box and the end of each policy in the draft plan explained the approach taken to each one. For some policies such as Policy ENV3 on a strong sense of remoteness or Strategic Policy M on the approach to the housing strategy there were considered to be a number of choices to be made on the overall approach the policy could take. A range of options were therefore generated and considered within this sustainability appraisal. For other policies there is less choice and flexibility on what the policy needs to say. Officers took the view that on some policies (for example Strategic Policy H on Habitats, Wildlife, Biodiversity and Geodiversity where the clear sustainability imperative is to make sure those sites are protected) meant that there were no realistic alternatives options that could be tested or that it would not be a good use of time and resources to generate and test alternatives for its own sake. Instead, the policy wording is tested against each sustainability objective and changes are recommended where it is felt that it would result in a more sustainable outcome.
- A summary of whether the preferred option included in the draft plan was the most sustainable when compared to alternative options was then included at [Table 2 in Chapter 6 of the Report](#).

2.6 The draft Plan and accompanying SA were placed on the Authority's website and made available for inspection at the Authority's offices in Helmsley and at local libraries for the duration of the consultation period. Statutory agencies were notified of the draft Plan's publication and consultation period, along with other consultees.

2.7 [Appendix 3](#) of the SA at this stage includes comments from the three statutory consultees consulted at the earlier scoping stage,

### **SA at the Pre-Submission Stage (Stage 3)**

2.8 This stage, [published for consultation in March 2019](#) carried out an appraisal of the 'Pre-Submission' version of the draft Local Plan. It updated the earlier Preferred Option SA Report (Stage 2). The policy wording was again tested against each Sustainability Objective and changes were recommended where it is felt that it would result in a more sustainable outcome. Suggested mitigation measures to improve policy outcomes were also set out. Cumulative effects were then considered.

2.9 [Appendix 5 of the SA](#) at this stage included an 'audit trail' for each policy which explained how it had been modified (or not) in light of the SA finding at each of the stages.

2.10 Consultation was carried out with comments welcomed until 20 May 2019.

2.11 The draft Plan and accompanying SA were placed on the Authority's website and made available for inspection at the Authority's offices in Helmsley and at local libraries for the duration of the consultation period. Statutory agencies were notified of the draft Plan's publication and consultation period, along with other consultees.

#### **SA at the Submission Stage (Stage 4)**

2.12 The SA was amended in light of comments made at Stage 3 and [republished](#) at Submission Stage (April 2019). [Appendix 5](#) includes the full SA of each policy with a description of alternatives considered an audit trail of how the iterative SA had influenced policies.

2.13 Pre-Submission consultation comments were also considered and a series of 'Main Modifications' were drawn up in light of those comments. An '[Addendum to the Sustainability Report](#)' (April 2019) was then prepared to inform and accompany the proposed Main and Minor Modifications to the Submission Local Plan and to report on the consultation responses to the Pre-Submission SA.

2.14 The responses received from the Environment Agency, Historic England or Natural England did not result in any proposed Modifications being proposed to the Plan. The Addendum:

- Screened the policies where a modification is proposed, and concludes whether or not the change could have a significant effect on the conclusions reached in the appraisal carried out at the Regulation 19 (Pre-Submission) stage
- If the screening concluded that changes were potentially significant it re-appraised those policies.

2.15 The draft Plan and accompanying SA were placed on the Authority's website and made available for inspection at the Authority's offices in Helmsley and at local libraries from the submission date and for the duration of the Examination in Public. Statutory agencies were notified of the draft Plan's publication and consultation period, along with other consultees.

#### **SA at the Adoption Stage (Stage 5)**

2.16 This report forms this stage. No further appraisal of changes was deemed necessary – the Main Modifications had been appraised as causing no significant effects and formed the vast majority of the Inspector's recommendations (some additional amendments to supporting text were recommended; however; in the opinion of Authority these are not significant and in any case were not to policy). No further assessment is therefore required.

2.17 The draft Plan and accompanying SA were placed on the Authority's website and made available for inspection at the Authority's offices in Helmsley. The Statutory agencies will be notified of the Plan's adoption, along with other consultees.

### **3. Compliance with Regulations**

3.1 The SA process has been carried out iteratively and informed the development of the Local Plan at each key stage.

3.2 Section 16(4) of the regulations (quoted at paragraph 1.3), state that when a plan is adopted a statement must be produced summarising:

- 1) How environmental / sustainability considerations have been integrated into the Plan;
- 2) How the SA report has been taken into account;

- 3) How opinions expressed in response to consultation on the SA report have been taken into account;
- 4) How the Local Authority made the relevant documents available;
- 5) The reasons for choosing the plan as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternative options dealt with; and
- 6) The measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant sustainability effects of the implementation of the plan or programme.

- 3.3 Section 2 of this Statement details the four stages of the SA prior to this one (The final Sustainability Statement), and contains links to the documents produced at the time. The Authority consistently set out an 'audit trail' of how the SA had influenced policies and an explanation of how alternatives had been considered in its SA documents (see [Appendix 5](#) of the Preferred Options version of the SA (Stage 2) and revised [Appendix 5](#) of the Pre Submission version). The [SA 'Addendum'](#) produced at the Submission Stage (Stage 4) also included a revised audit trail where policies would change in response to Main Modifications proposed. **The Authority therefore considers that the requirements of (1) and (2) above have been met.**
- 3.4 Statutory agencies (including the three Strategic Environmental Assessment bodies (Historic England, Environment Agency and Natural England) were consulted at the first Scoping Stage (their responses are in [Appendix 3](#) of the SA Report published at the Preferred Options (Stage 2), when they were again consulted. They were then notified of the draft Plan's pre-publication and submission stages, along with other consultees. The Authority has also consistently published a list of all comments received – see its responses at [Pre-Submission](#) and [Submission](#) Stages. This includes any comments made on the SA. **The Authority therefore considers that the requirements of (3) above have been met.**
- 3.5 The draft Plan and accompanying SA at each stage of Consultation (Stages 1-4) were placed on the Authority's website and made available for inspection at the Authority's offices in Helmsley and at local libraries for the duration of each of the consultation periods detailed above. **The Authority therefore considers that the requirements of (4) above have been met.**
- 3.6 Reasonable alternative options were set out in 'grey boxes' under each policy in the [Preferred Options version](#) of the Plan. [Appendix 5](#) of the Preferred Options version of the SA and [Appendix 5](#) of the Pre-Submission version then appraised alternatives against the SA framework. The [SA Addendum Report](#) repeated this where Main Modifications would result in changes to the Plan. **The Authority therefore considers that the requirements of (5) above have been met.**
- 3.7 The SEA Regulations require that: *"The responsible authority shall monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of each plan or programme with the purpose of identifying unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage and being able to undertake appropriate remedial action."* The Regulations also state that the SA Adoption Statement should set out *"...the measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan or programme."* A full monitoring framework is included at Appendix 1 of the adopted Local Plan ([link to be inserted](#)). **The Authority therefore considers that the requirements of (6) above have been met.**

## **4. Conclusion**

- 4.1 This SA statement details the iterations of the SA that have been applied to various version of policies within consultation versions of the North York Moors Local Plan. It fulfils the requirement to produce a statement detailing how Section 16(4) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans Regulations. For the reasons set out in Section 3 of this Report the Authority concludes that the requirements of these Regulations have been met.

**If you would like further information, please contact us:**

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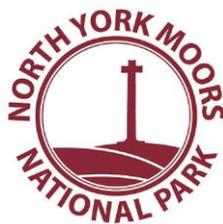


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