

Introduction

- 1.1 This document outlines the process and outcomes in respect of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Rochdale MBC Core Strategy Development Planning Document (DPD). It is a non technical summary which explains the purpose of the appraisal and how this has influenced the preparation of the Core Strategy. It also explains where the full document can be viewed and commented on. This SA is required by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the European Union Directive 2001/42/EC (SEA Directive), the latter requiring 'Environmental Assessment' which may be, and in this case is, incorporated into the SA process.
- 1.2 Sustainability Appraisal assesses the potential impact of a particular plan on economic, social and environmental objectives to ensure that it promotes sustainable development. In this way the plan can be amended to take account of any negative impacts it may have. For a Development Plan Document such as the Core Strategy, integration of Sustainability Appraisal into its preparation process is vital. Thus the appraisal has been aligned with all phases of the DPD preparation.

The Core Strategy and its likely significant effects

- 1.3 The Core Strategy DPD is the key document of the Local Development Framework (LDF), the statutory land – use plan for the Borough. It will set a strategic framework for growth and development in the Borough up to at least 2026. It will have a significant impact upon where new development takes place in the borough, and therefore will significantly impact upon quality of life of residents, the number of jobs in the borough, the quality of the environment, (both natural and built) and the character of the borough. Biodiversity could be harmed or enhanced by the development of the borough, and the Core Strategy can influence this. Wider issues which the Core Strategy can influence include climate change and pollution in the region and beyond.
- 1.4 The Core Strategy is being developed in a number of stages. The 'Issues and Options' stage identified six 'spatial options' for the future development of the borough. This was then refined into 'Preferred Options', containing a spatial strategy, key strategic sites and locations and core policies. Now this has been developed into a 'Pre Submission' document, which will be put out for consultation on it's 'soundness', prior to the Examination in Public. All the stages so far have been subject to Sustainability Appraisal, and the appraisals themselves have been subject to consultation along with the various stages of the DPD documents.
- 1.5 The Core Strategy is now at pre – submission consultation stage, which means that comments on the 'soundness' of the document will be invited, prior to the final consultation / Examination in Public.

The SA Process

- 1.6 The first stage in the SA process was to carry out a scoping exercise, setting the context and objectives. This involved scoping other relevant policies and plans and baseline information, leading to identification of key sustainability issues and problems and development of an SA Framework – ‘sustainability objectives’ against which the plan will be assessed. These objectives derive from other relevant plans or programmes, in particular the UK Sustainable Development Strategy and the local Community Strategy, and from a review of the baseline information / issues and problems. This scoping exercise and Framework development was undertaken and is outlined in the SA Scoping Report which was published in April 2009. 26 objectives were identified.
- 1.7 The six spatial options of the Core Strategy ‘Issues and Options’ were assessed against the objectives and this assessment influenced the development of the ‘Preferred Options’ spatial strategy, key sites and locations for future development and core policies. All of these were then assessed using the same objectives. The spatial strategy and core policies of the ‘Pre Submission’ document have also been appraised.

The difference the process has made to date

- 1.8 The initial sustainability appraisal which took place of the six spatial options helped to identify the most sustainable options and where different options performed best in sustainability terms. This informed the selection process and the subsequent preferred options document.
- 1.9 The appraisal of the key sites and locations for future development growth helped to identify the most sustainable locations and assisted in directing proposed future growth where it can be most sustainably accommodated, including suggesting refinements for the ‘growth corridors’ identified in the Preferred Options document, some of which are essentially a number of the sites which have been assessed. The appraisal of the core policies allowed for refinement of the policies to ensure that they will help to deliver more sustainable growth.
- 1.10 Thus the Preferred Options document which was submitted for consultation took on board the assessment process in order to ensure maximum contribution to the future sustainable development of the borough, and the current Pre Submission document reflects that. The draft Pre Submission document has now been subject to a further Sustainability Appraisal, and further revisions have taken place as a result of this assessment.

Monitoring the significant effects of the plan

- 1.11 It is possible that the plan will be further amended but these changes are not likely to be significant at this 'publication stage' as this is the version of the Core Strategy that the Council proposes to submit to government following careful consideration of alternative options, detailed consultation and sustainability appraisal. However, even small scale changes required will be appraised if they have potential sustainability impacts and are not purely about presentation or clarification. Also, the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan will be monitored to identify any unforeseen adverse effects and to enable appropriate remedial action to be taken. This will be done by developing indicators which relate to the sustainability objectives.

How to comment on the report

- 1.12 Comments on this draft SA report, as well as on the Development Plan Document itself, can be made during the six-week formal consultation period which begins on the 8th November 2010. Official comments forms are available at www.rochdale.gov.uk and also at the locations listed in appendix 3.

- 1.13 All comments must be submitted by 23rd December to:

By post: Strategic Planning Team
Floor 2
Telegraph House
Baillie Street
Rochdale, OL16 1JH

By email: LDF.consultation@rochdale.gov.uk