



Southampton City Centre Action Plan (March 2015)

Sustainability Appraisal Post Adoption Statement

Introduction

This Sustainability Statement provides a summary of the assessment of the City Centre Action Plan. It has been produced in accordance with Regulation 36 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 and with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (16) (3) and (4). This requires the local authority to set out:

- a. how sustainability considerations have been integrated into the City Centre Action Plan;
- b. how the sustainability assessment has been taken into account;
- c. how opinions expressed in response to the consultation have been taken into account;
- d. how the results of any consultations have been taken into account;
- e. the reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and
- f. the measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan or programme.

City Centre Action Plan

Following an examination in public on 31 March – 4 April 2014, Southampton's City Centre Action Plan was found sound by an independent Planning Inspector with some changes. The final City Centre Action Plan was adopted by Southampton City Council on 18 March 2015.

The City Centre Action Plan is supported by a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to ensure that the strategy accords with the principles of sustainable development and an Appropriate Assessment (AA) to demonstrate that the policies in the plan do not harm European designated sites for nature conservation.

Sustainability considerations

Sustainability assessments were produced by the Sustainable Development Officer at different stages of the City Centre Action Plan and were available for consultation at the same time as the strategy. The following assessments were undertaken and informed the Core Strategy:

City Centre Action Plan Issues and Options stage:

1. Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (SA/SEA) Scoping Report (April 2007)

This report set the context for the assessment, established the baseline and decided on the scope of future assessments. The scoping report highlighted a number of relevant policies, plans, programmes and legislation which would provide a context for the City Centre Action Plan.

The baseline data was used to help draw out a range of key issues for the city. These key issues were set out in the Issues and Options paper and developed in later stages.

City Centre Action Plan Preferred Approach:

2. Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment (January 2012)

The report was used to help develop and refine options and to assess their effects for the Preferred Options and later papers. They included a preliminary assessment of all policies, a detailed assessment of policies with a significant negative impact and an assessment of cumulative effect.

The Preferred Options paper incorporated results of the Sustainability Appraisal for each chapter linked to the preferred policy options.

Proposed Submission City Centre Action Plan:

3. Sustainability Appraisal & Strategic Environmental Assessment (August 2013)

Due to the number of changes made between the Preferred Options and Proposed Submission papers it was decided to produce a second full report at Proposed Submission stage.

Submission City Centre Action Plan:

4. Sustainability Appraisal & Strategic Environmental Assessment Revision Updates & Update Note (December 2013)

As a result of responses received on the City Centre Action Plan and sustainability assessments and changes proposed by the council, an update note and revised SA Report was produced.

Consultation

The sustainability assessments were consulted on at the same time as the Core Strategy and were sent out directly to a range of organisations including the designated Consultation Bodies; Natural England, the Environment Agency and English Heritage.

In the process of producing the assessments, specific organisations were consulted on the methodology and the scope of the assessment.

Justification of options and alternatives chosen

The City Centre Action Plan reflects national and regional planning policies; the approach of the City of Southampton Strategy and the wider approach to development in the sub region. The options presented were a range of detailed policy options.

Following the Issues and Options discussion paper, the preferred options for the City Centre Action Plan were chosen based on consultation responses and findings from the sustainability appraisal analysis. The background paper 'Alternative Options Considered & Rejected' (January 2012) sets out the justification for these choices.

The examination in public on the City Centre Action Plan provided the opportunity for the Inspector to assess whether the plan was the most appropriate approach. In her assessment of legal compliance, the Inspector stated in her report that the Sustainability Appraisal was adequate.

In finding the City Centre Action Plan sound (with modifications), the Inspector agreed that it was justified, effective and consistent with national policy. Planning Inspectorate guidance notes that to be 'justified' the document has to be founded on a robust and credible evidence base and is the most appropriate strategy when considered against reasonable alternatives.

Inspector's changes

The Inspector approved the City Centre Action Plan with some changes. She concluded that with the recommended main modifications set out in the Appendix the Southampton Core Strategy Partial Review and the Southampton City Centre Area Action Plan satisfy the requirements of Section 20(5) of the 2004 Act and meet the criteria for soundness in the National Planning Policy Framework.

The Main Modifications to the CCAP can be summarised as follows:

- Changes to the retail policies to provide an effective strategy for the growth of the city centre as a regional shopping destination;
- Changes to the office policies to provide a justified and effective strategy for office growth with further details about where and how it will take place;
- Changes to ensure a balanced approach that enables the sustainable growth and competitiveness of the Port;
- Changes to make the plan more effective in terms of the protection and enhancement of the historic parks, green spaces and waterfront views;
- Changes to the site specific policies to make sure that the spatial implications of change are addressed in a positive and sustainable way;
- Changes to ensure that the plan provisions are delivered effectively.

None of these changes will make further assessment necessary.

Monitoring

The City Centre Action Plan will be monitored to assess data and trends and to consider whether the approach set out continues to be the best one given the available alternatives and that the policies are relevant and effective. Part D/ Chapter 6 in the City Centre Action Plan sets out policy outcomes and delivery mechanisms and key local and Core Output indicators.

The formal monitoring of the City Centre Action Plan will take the form of an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). The Sustainability Appraisal proposed additional monitoring information in support of the sustainability effects. The monitoring framework will be refined and expanded over time in accordance with Government guidance and following further consultation with key partners.