

TITLE:	<b>Derwentside Local Development Framework: Sustainability Appraisal – Scoping Report</b>
TO/ON:	<b>Executive – 13<sup>th</sup> November 2006</b>
BY:	<b>Director of Environmental Services</b>
PORTFOLIO:	<b>Environment</b>
STATUS:	<b>Report</b>

## **STRATEGIC FACTOR CHECKLIST**

The Council's Corporate Management Team has confirmed that the Strategic Factor Checklist has been applied to the development of this report, and there are no key issues, over and above those set out in the body of the report, that need to be brought to Members' attention.

### **1 SUBJECT MATTER AND PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the completion of the Scoping Report for the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Local Development Framework (LDF). A full copy of the Scoping Report is attached to the report but there are a number of lengthy appendices that are available in the Member's Room or can be requested from the Planning Policy Team.
- 1.2 There are no cost implications of the consultation exercise on the Scoping Report other than printing and postage, which are covered by existing budgets.

### **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Sustainability Appraisal is the systematic testing and refinement of a plan or strategy against a set of sustainability objectives. It is an iterative process that seeks to ensure all important social, economic and environmental considerations are both integrated within the document, and are mutually reinforcing wherever possible. The rationale is that the application of sustainability appraisal will result in a stronger plan or strategy, and an audit trail of the reasoning behind the refinements made to produce the final document.
- 2.2 To meet the requirements of the new Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (SEA Directive) all documents that make up the Derwentside Local Development Framework must be subject to a rigorous SA process.
- 2.3 The Sustainability Appraisal process is being led by Derwentside District Council in conjunction with the Sustainability Team at Durham County Council, an arrangement that conforms to guidance to maintain a necessary degree of

independence. In addition, it brings a wider environmental and sustainability perspective to the existing planning expertise within the District Council.

### **3 SCOPING REPORT**

- 3.1 The Scoping Report sets out the results of the scoping exercise conducted to arrive at the key sustainability issues and problems relating to the Derwentside LDF and to develop the framework of objectives and indicators upon which the SA is based.
- 3.2 The first section of the Scoping report considers other relevant plans, policies and programmes at all levels from international to local, thereby ensuring that all economic, social and environmental protection objectives that have been established are considered in the preparation of the Derwentside LDF. This appraisal also informs the SA objectives. Full details are in Appendix 1 of the Scoping Report.
- 3.3 The second section is a review of baseline statistics. Baseline information allows trends to be monitored and can be used as a tool for denoting the success of the relevant SA objectives. In addition, the information highlights social, environmental and economic issues and problems that should be addressed in the LDF documents. Full details are in Appendix 2 of the Scoping Report.
- 3.4 The next section uses the literature review and baseline information to identify key issues and problems facing the District. Examples include:
- Disparity between household income and house prices that limits the availability of decent and affordable homes for everyone.
  - Derwentside's remaining distinctive and historic landscape and townscape should be protected against inappropriate development and activities.
  - Climate change may raise flood levels in areas already at risk and puts other areas at risk due to rising water levels. New development should be sited away from the areas of greatest risk.
- The full list is given in Table 3 within the Scoping Report.
- 3.5 All of the work in the previous sections of the Scoping Report is then used to identify the Sustainability Objectives. These are a set of environmental, social and economic issues that are pertinent to Derwentside and will illustrate how best to meet sustainable development in the future. All policies and proposals in the LDF will then be tested against these objectives to assess its likely impact. Full details of the SA Framework, including the objectives with indicators and sources are listed in Appendix 3 of the Scoping Report. A summary list is given in Table 4 within the body of the Report.

### **4 NEXT STEPS**

- 4.1 The final requirement of the Scoping Report under the SEA Directive requires consultation with various stakeholders with an interest in the development of

the LDF. This helps to ensure the process will be comprehensive and robust to support the LDF during later stages. The Scoping Report must therefore be made available for public consultation and particularly the three statutory environmental consultation bodies Natural England, English Heritage and the Environment Agency.

- 4.2 If Executive approves the Scoping Report then it is intended to carry out consultation from Friday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2006 for eight weeks until Friday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2007 to allow for the Christmas period. The consultation will request general comments on the Scoping Report but will also ask the following specific questions:
1. Are there any further plans or programmes that should be included?
  2. Is the baseline information complete?
  3. Are the SA objectives correct?
  4. Is the framework representative of the objectives?
- 4.3 The approved SA Framework will be used throughout the preparation process of all future LDF documents. It will be able to predict and evaluate the effects of each document's policies and proposals thereby informing the identification of those most appropriate and, through the LDF, ensuring a more sustainable future for Derwentside.
- 4.4 The approved SA Framework could also be used to appraise other Council documents and the Community Strategy. It is important that sustainability is a central consideration in the preparation of all future strategies and policies and the easiest way to ensure this is the case is to use the same sustainability appraisal process used by the LDF. The Government is also now promoting 'sustainable' community strategies and because of the close links with the LDF it is sensible to use the same SA framework.

## **5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 The Executive is recommended to:
- i) Approve the contents of the Derwentside Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report for public consultation commencing on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2006.

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