

Durham County Council

**Sustainability Appraisal and
Habitats Regulations
Assessment Post Adoption
Statement**

County Durham Plan

2020



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1 Introduction

1.0.1 Durham County Council adopted its Local Plan, known as the County Durham Plan, on 21st October 2020. The County Durham Plan sets the policy framework for development in the county to 2035, setting out how many new homes and jobs are needed, where they will go, what infrastructure is required and how important landscapes and habitats will be protected.

1.0.2 During the preparation of the County Durham Plan the Council was required by law to carry out a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Plan as it developed. Both the SA and SEA requirements were met through a single integrated process (referred to as SA), the method and findings of which were described in a number of SA Reports published alongside the different versions of the County Durham Plan during its development. These included:

- Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (2016)
- Interim Sustainability Appraisal of the County Durham Plan Report- Issues and Options (2016)
- Sustainability Appraisal Preferred Options Report and Non Technical Summary (2018)
- Sustainability Appraisal Report Pre-Submission Draft and Non Technical Summary (2019)
- Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment of Main Modifications (2020)

1.0.3 This statement is the final output of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and its incorporated Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process.

1.0.4 In addition to the SA, the Council was also required by law to carry out a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Plan in order to determine whether there would be any 'likely significant effect' on any European protected wildlife site as a result of the Plan's implementation (either on its own or 'in combination' with other plans or projects) and, if so, whether these effects will result in any 'adverse effects on site integrity'. The following HRA reports were published alongside the different versions of the County Durham Plan during its development:

- Interim Habitats Regulations Assessment of the County Durham Plan Issues and Options (2016)
- Habitats Regulations Assessment of the County Durham Plan Preferred Options (2018)
- Pre-Submission Habitats Regulations Assessment of the County Durham Plan (2019)
- Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment of Main Modifications (2020)

Requirement for the Adoption Statement

1.0.5 In relation to SA, the SEA Regulations ⁽ⁱ⁾ require a number of steps to be taken upon adoption of a local plan (in this case the County Durham Plan). Specifically, SEA Regulation 16 sets out the post adoption procedures for the SEA and requires that, as soon as reasonably

i The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 - SI No. 1633

practicable after the adoption of a plan for which an SA/SEA has been carried out, the planning authority must make a copy of the plan publicly available alongside a copy of the SA Report and an 'SEA adoption statement', and inform the public and consultation bodies about the availability of these. The consultation bodies are Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency. The SEA adoption statement must explain:

- How environmental (and sustainability) considerations have been integrated into the plan
- How the Environmental Report (contained within the SA Report) has been taken into account during preparation of the plan.
- How the opinions expressed by the public, consultation bodies and (where appropriate) other European Member States during consultation on the plan and the Environmental/SA Report have been taken into account.
- The reasons for choosing the plan as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives considered.
- The measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental and sustainability effects of the implementation of the plan.

1.0.6 As the SEA process was incorporated into the SA process, this document constitutes the SA/SEA Adoption Statement for the County Durham Plan. There are no legal requirements to produce a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Adoption statement, however as both assessment processes informed the development of the County Durham Plan, this statement includes an overview of the HRA outcomes for completeness.

1.0.7 The document is structured according to the SEA Regulation requirements as follows:

- **Section 2** summarises how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan by explaining who carried out the SA and HRA and what assessment framework was used.
- **Section 3** summarises the links between the plan-making and SA and HRA processes and how the SA and HRA reports were taken into account.
- **Section 4** summarises the consultation opinions provided on the SA at each stage and describes what changes were made to the SA process in response to these comments. A summary is also provided of how the consultation opinions shaped the HRA.
- **Section 5** describes the reasonable alternatives considered as part of the Plan preparation process and why certain options were chosen.
- **Section 6** describes how the significant sustainability/environmental impacts of the County Durham Plan will be monitored.

2 Integration of Environmental and Sustainability Considerations

2.0.1 The SA of the County Durham Plan commenced in 2016 and was undertaken by suitably qualified and experienced officers within the Council's Low Carbon Economy Team. The Low Carbon Economy Team has subsequently undertaken all further stages of the SA of the County Durham Plan and has also prepared this SA Adoption Statement.

2.0.2 The purpose of the SA was to ensure that the County Durham Plan contributed towards the achievement of sustainable development. In order to do this, the SA assisted the Council in Plan development by identifying the key sustainability/environmental issues within County Durham, predicting what would be the likely effects of the Plan on these issues, and proposing recommendations to improve the sustainability of the Plan in relation to reasonable alternatives, policy wording and mitigating measures. The aim was to ensure that the Plan has as many positive effects as possible and that any negative effects are avoided or mitigated as far as reasonably possible when the policies are implemented and result in new development within County Durham.

2.0.3 The SA was undertaken iteratively so that at each stage of Plan preparation an assessment of the sustainability effects of the reasonable alternatives and the subsequent policies and allocations were made. SA Reports were produced to describe the approach taken, identify the likely effects, and put forward recommendations to avoid or minimise negative effects identified or to enhance positive effects. In this way, environmental and sustainability considerations were integrated into the County Durham Plan as it was developed.

2.0.4 The way in which the environmental and sustainability effects of the County Durham Plan were described, analysed and compared was through the use of the SA Framework which contained a total of 15 SA objectives and associated decision making criteria. The SA Framework was developed during the Scoping stage of the SA process and the SA objectives covered all of the SEA topics listed in Schedule 2 of the SEA regulations. The SA framework was the main tool used at each stage for assessing the likely effects of reasonable alternatives and policies for the Plan and its use ensured that alternatives were assessed in a comparable, consistent way at each stage of Plan preparation.

Table 1 SA Framework and associated SEA Topic

| Sustainability Appraisal Objectives | Criteria: Will the emerging Plan... | Associated SEA topic |
|--|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. To provide everybody with the opportunity to live in a decent and affordable home | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the requirement for affordable housing is met across a range of tenures? • Decrease the number of vacant properties and properties that don't meet the decent homes standard? • Site new housing in deliverable locations linked to identified need? • Ensure that a mix of housing type and size is available in the county? • Improve energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty? | Population and human health |
| 2. To promote strong and secure communities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance a sense of safety and security? | Population and human health |

| Sustainability Appraisal Objectives | Criteria: Will the emerging Plan... | Associated SEA topic |
|---|---|------------------------------------|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deter / prevent crime? • Reduce the adverse impacts of traffic (including HGVs) on communities? • Encourage a sense of community and wider engagement in community activities or local democracy to allow residents to influence social, economic and environmental decision-making? • Promote mutual understanding of different ethnic and cultural groups? • Help cater for the needs of an ageing population? • Increase cultural awareness through enhancing and promoting the local historic environment? | |
| <p>3. To improve education, training and life-long learning, and maintain a healthy labour market</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the quantity or quality of education, training opportunities or facilities? • Improve access to education or training opportunities? • Promote lifelong learning? • Raise educational and employment aspirations? | <p>Population and human health</p> |
| <p>4. To reduce health inequalities and promote healthy lifestyles</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to promotion of healthier lifestyles and healthy leisure opportunities? (e.g. cycling and walking) • Improve access to public open space / multi-functional green infrastructure? • Reduce health inequalities? • Improve access to healthcare? | <p>Population and human health</p> |
| <p>5. To reduce the need to travel and promote use of sustainable transport</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the need for travel / transport (e.g. by ensuring local needs are met locally or by telecommunication)? • Help people to access jobs, services and facilities easily? • Protect / increase the range of shops, services, amenities and employment opportunities in town and village centres? • Promote / widen opportunities for 'greener' modes of travel (walking, cycling public or shared transport)? • Ensure development is served by an appropriate level of transport infrastructure including public and sustainable transport networks? • Move freight from road to rail / sea? | <p>Population and human health</p> |

| Sustainability Appraisal Objectives | Criteria: Will the emerging Plan... | Associated SEA topic |
|---|--|-----------------------------|
| 6. To alleviate deprivation and poverty | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help those on lower incomes? • Contribute towards local regeneration initiatives, or benefit areas suffering from economic deprivation? • Improve economic, social and environmental conditions in the most deprived areas and for the most deprived groups? • Improve physical access to jobs? • Help reduce unemployment? • Encourage higher incomes? | Population and human health |
| 7. To develop a sustainable and diverse economy with high levels of employment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguard employment or create new employment opportunities? • Promote business expansion / development? • Promote growth in key economic sectors? • Encourage clean technologies to locate in the area? • Reduce road congestion and help reduce journey times to key employment sites? • Encourage young people to stay in the area? • Encourage the use of local labour, goods and services? • Improve the diversity / resilience of the economy? • Help realise the economic potential of the County's natural and historic assets in a sustainable way? | Population and human health |
| 8. To reduce the causes of climate change | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the demand for energy or increase energy efficiency of buildings, transport or industry? • Minimise greenhouse gas emissions from waste management? • Contribute to the development / wider use of renewable energy sources? • Contribute to the absorption of carbon dioxide? | Climatic Factors |
| 9. To respond and enable adaptation to the inevitable impacts of climate change | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise the risk of/ from flooding or coastal erosion? • Discourage inappropriate development in areas at risk from flooding? • Ensure that new development does not give rise to flood risk elsewhere? | Climatic Factors |

| Sustainability Appraisal Objectives | Criteria: Will the emerging Plan... | Associated SEA topic |
|--|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help to cope with climate extremes, e.g. design of buildings and urban areas? • Allow for habitats or species of biodiversity importance to adapt to climate change? | |
| <p>10. To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect or enhance internationally designated wildlife/ geological sites? • Ensure net gains in biodiversity are achieved? • Protect or enhance nationally designated wildlife/ geological sites and protected species? • Protect or enhance UK and Durham Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats and species? • Protect or enhance other areas of local importance for biodiversity or geodiversity (LNRs, CWS, CGS, semi-natural ancient woodland)? • Prevent deterioration and fragmentation of habitat and establish and maintain sustainable habitat networks? • Improve access to or understanding of local biodiversity/ geodiversity resources? • Ensure adequate and appropriate mitigation for any biodiversity loss which may occur as a result of development? • Create new areas or sites of biodiversity/ geodiversity value? | <p>Biodiversity, flora and fauna</p> |
| <p>11. To protect and enhance the quality and character of landscape and townscape</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and enhance designated protected landscape areas (i.e. AONB, Durham Heritage Coast)? • Protect and enhance local landscape character and quality? • Protect and maintain the openness of the green belt? • Ensure that new developments reflect the distinctive character and appearance of the local area? • Encourage good quality design in new development? • Protect and enhance the vitality and viability of the county's town centres and main village centres? • Protect and improve the quality of public areas/ discourage fly tipping and reduce litter? • Help regeneration of degraded built environments? | <p>Cultural, heritage and landscape</p> |

| Sustainability Appraisal Objectives | Criteria: Will the emerging Plan... | Associated SEA topic |
|--|---|---------------------------------|
| 12. To protect and enhance cultural heritage and the historic environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and enhance the character, appearance or setting of designated and non-designated heritage assets? • Reduce the number or severity of designated and non-designated heritage assets at risk? • Protect and enhance locally and regionally important designated and non-designated heritage assets? • Realise the economic and educational potential of designated and non-designated heritage assets and help make them accessible? • Recognise the contribution of conserving and enhancing existing buildings and other heritage assets to local distinctiveness, sustainable resource use and climate change mitigation? • Ensure the recording and appropriate protection of undiscovered archaeological features in areas of potential development? • Promote the maintenance, sensitive adaptation and re-use of buildings? | Cultural heritage and landscape |
| 13. To protect and improve air, water and soil resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and improve local air quality? • Protect and maintain or improve surface & groundwater quality or the physical integrity of aquifers? • Reduce the amount of water used? • Keep water consumption / emission within local carrying capacity limits? • Improve areas of historic land contamination and prevent contamination to new areas? • Encourage the location of development on previously developed land, while taking account of biodiversity value that may be present? • Minimise the loss of better quality agricultural land to development? • Promote good soil management in land reclamation? • Improve the WFD water body classification? | Air Water Soil |
| 14. To reduce waste and encourage the sustainable and efficient use of materials | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage an increase in the reduction, re-use, recycling and recovery of energy from waste (progress away from landfill and up the “waste hierarchy”)? • Encourage the use of recycled / reused materials? | Material Assets |

| Sustainability Appraisal Objectives | Criteria: Will the emerging Plan... | Associated SEA topic |
|--|--|----------------------|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimise the use of new non-renewable resources? • Reduce the adverse impacts of waste management facilities to acceptable levels? • Encourage the community to take responsibility for reducing its own waste? • Promote the maintenance, sensitive adaptation and re-use of buildings? | |
| 15. To improve the sustainability of minerals extraction and use and reduce adverse impacts on communities and the environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help meet an identified need for minerals? • Reduce the adverse impacts of minerals processing and extraction to acceptable levels? • Reduce the energy used in minerals extraction, processing and transport? • Ensure the efficient use of minerals resources? • Avoid the sterilisation of economically important mineral resources? • Promote good practice in land reclamation having regard to sustainable after-use appropriate to the locality? | Material Assets |

2.0.5 Further to the use of the SA Framework, a set of specific, tailored sustainability criteria were developed for undertaking the assessment of over 1,700 individual, potential housing sites (please see **Appendix A**). The housing site assessment criteria was reviewed by Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency and its use provided an overall sustainability score for each housing site in order to inform the selection of housing allocations. The assessment undertaken using the housing criteria was desk-based and principally utilised Durham County Council's GIS mapping system.

2.0.6 In addition, environmental and sustainability considerations were also integrated into the County Durham Plan through close working between the Low Carbon Economy Team, other environmental specialists within the Council's Landscape, Heritage, Archaeology, Ecology and Transport Teams and Spatial Policy officers drafting the Plan. Early draft policies and sites were provided to the Low Carbon Economy Team for appraisal and the SA officers engaged with environmental specialists within the Council and Spatial Policy officers during the process of carrying out the SA of the emerging Plan. The SA was also informed by an appropriate environmental evidence base.

2.0.7 Finally, the County Durham Plan was also subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) in accordance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The purpose of HRA is to contribute towards the protection of a network of sites known

as Natura 2000 that have rare or important habitats and species threatened at a pan-European level in order to safeguard biodiversity. County Durham has a number of Natura 2000 sites, comprising:

- 6 Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) - protected because they make a significant contribution to conserving habitats and species listed in the Habitats Directive; and
- 3 Special Protection Areas (SPA)- protected because they constitute internationally important areas for breeding, feeding, wintering or the migration of rare and vulnerable species of birds listed under the Birds Directive.

2.0.8 The HRA of the County Durham Plan was undertaken separately from the SA but the findings of the HRA informed the SA, particularly in relation to predicting effects against SA objective 10: To protect and enhance biodiversity. The following section provides an overview of the HRA outcomes.

2.1 Habitats Regulations Assessment Overview

2.1.1 The HRA of the County Durham Plan commenced in 2016 and was undertaken collaboratively by suitably qualified and experienced officers within the Council's Ecology and Low Carbon Economy Team. The HRA was also undertaken iteratively alongside the Plan's development, with emerging policies and proposals assessed and reviewed, and recommendations made to ensure that the final Plan does not result in any significant adverse effects on any Natura 2000 site, alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Appropriate assessments, appropriate to the strategic nature of the County Durham Plan and the anticipated outcomes, were undertaken of those aspects where the possibility of 'likely significant effects' (LSE) on Natura 2000 sites could not be clearly or self-evidently excluded during development of the County Durham Plan. The following table summarises the aspects of the County Durham Plan which were subject to Appropriate Assessment and outcomes:

Table 2 Appropriate Assessment Outcomes

| County Durham Plan | LSE Identified | Relevant LSE Natura 2000 Site | Evidence used to Support Appropriate Assessment | Appropriate Assessment Outcome |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| Housing allocations within 6km of coastal Natura 2000 sites in combination with windfall development and tourism. | Increasing recreational pressure and disturbance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Durham Coast SAC • Northumbria Coast SPA (and Ramsar) • Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA (and Ramsar) • Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast potential SPA (pSPA) | The Appropriate Assessment was supported by a number of independent over-wintering bird surveys and visitor surveys. | Adverse effects on the integrity of the relevant Natura 2000 sites could not be excluded |
| Allocation of a Western extension to Heights Quarry | Disturbance to breeding birds | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Pennine Moors SPA | The Appropriate Assessment was supported by independent over-wintering bird surveys and breeding wader/black grouse surveys | No adverse effects on the integrity of the North Pennine Moors SPA. No further action required. |

2.1.2 As adverse effects on the integrity of coastal Natura 2000 sites as a result of increasing recreational pressure and disturbance could not be excluded an avoidance strategy was developed. A three-pronged approach to the strategy has been taken which includes:

- 1. General presumption against any net increase in residential development within 0.4km of the coastal sites**

2. **Provision/enhancement of suitable natural greenspace** to reduce the frequency of visits to the coastal sites by residents and hence reduce pressure on them.
3. **Access management and monitoring measures** to reduce and monitor the effects of residents and those from a wider catchment who visit the coastal sites.

2.1.3 A complimentary guidance document was also produced for developers which explains the requirements of the strategy, associated greenspace enhancement requirements related to the housing allocations in the County Durham Plan and financial contributions towards Coastal Access Management and Monitoring measures.

2.1.4 The HRA concluded that the implementation of the avoidance strategy along with the monitoring proposals will effectively ensure that adverse effects upon the integrity of the coastal Natura 2000 sites will be avoided. The continued co-ordinated implementation of strategic avoidance measures between Durham County Council and its neighbouring authorities along with other coastal local authorities in the North East region will also ensure that there will be no residual adverse in-combination effects.

3 How the Environmental Reports were taken into account

3.0.1 As stated in section 2 of this statement, the SA of the County Durham Plan was undertaken iteratively, so that an assessment of sustainability and environmental effects was made at each stage of its development. SA reports were produced to describe the predicted sustainability impacts of the Plan's overarching vision, objectives, reasonable alternatives and policies and to put forward recommendations relating to the most sustainable alternatives, identification of additional alternatives for consideration and measures to avoid or minimise negative effects and enhance positive ones.

3.0.2 Spatial Policy officers preparing the County Durham Plan took the SA findings and recommendations into account whilst making changes to the Plan and their response to each SA recommendation was documented in the SA reports. As an example, the yellow text boxes on pages 268-269 and 271-272 in the 2018 Pre-Submission SA Report set out:

- Recommendations made in relation to the most sustainable reasonable alternative approaches to addressing development in the countryside, Spatial Policy officer's response and justification for selecting the chosen approach; and
- Recommendations to better align the wording of the subsequent policy with sustainability objectives and Spatial Policy officer's justification for accepting or rejecting certain aspects.

3.0.3 Summary assessment tables were also included in the SA report to show where improvements to previously predicted outcomes against the SA Framework could be made as a result of taking the SA findings into account. By way of example, the following table shows that as a result of taking SA recommendations into account, the negative economic effects and very negative environmental effects initially predicted for the first draft of the Development in the Countryside policy were avoided and the policy was re-worded so that positive effects could be alternatively predicted. By the Pre-Submission stage of the Plan's development, the uncertainty surrounding the application of the policy to minerals development could also be resolved as a result of accepting SA recommendations in relation to improving clarity on this aspect. The summary table is shown as follows:

| Summary Assessment of the Preferred Options and Pre-Submission versions of the Development in the Countryside Policy | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------|----------------------------|------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|---|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Policy | Timescale | SA Objectives | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | 1. Decent Affordable Homes | 2. Strong Secure Communities | 3. Education, Training & Lifelong Learning | 4. Health: Inequalities & Lifestyles | 5. Need to Travel & Sustainable Transport | 6. Alleviate Deprivation | 7. Economy & Employment | 8. Climate Change: Mitigation | 9. Climate Change: Adaptation | 10. Biodiversity & Geodiversity | 11. Landscape & Townscape | 12. Historic Environment | 13. Resources: Air, Water & Soil | 14. Waste & Use of Materials | 15. Minerals Extraction & Impacts |
| Draft Preferred Options version | S | 0 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | 0 | ✗✗ | ✗✗ | ✗✗ | ✓ | ✓ | ? |
| | M | 0 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | 0 | ✗✗ | ✗✗ | ✗✗ | ✓ | ✓ | ? |
| | L | 0 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | 0 | ✗✗ | ✗✗ | ✗✗ | ✓ | ✓ | ? |
| Final Preferred Options version | S | 0 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 0 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ? |
| | M | 0 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 0 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ? |
| | L | 0 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 0 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ? |
| Pre-Submission Version | S | 0 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 0 | 0 | |
| | M | 0 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 0 | 0 | |
| | L | 0 | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 0 | 0 | |

3.0.4 Section 5.1 of the 2018 Pre-Submissions Draft SA report (page 631 onward) also collates all the key SA recommendations for each individual policy area of the Plan and explains how they were taken into account in the County Durham Plan. The following table, more broadly outlines how the preparation of both the SA and HRA Reports corresponded with each stage of Plan preparation, and how the assessments were taken into account and influenced the Plan making process.

Table 3 Iterations of the County Durham Plan and Accompanying SA and HRA Work

| Plan Iteration | Accompanying SA & HRA Work | How SA and HRA Reports were Taken into Account |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| Issues and Options (2016) | Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (2016) | <p>The scoping stage of the SA involved compiling information about the social, economic and environmental baseline for the plan area as well as the policy context, key sustainability issues and how issues and problems manifest themselves in different geographic parts of County Durham. The key outcome of this stage was the production of a set of sustainability objectives and decision making criteria known as the SA Framework which was then used to predict the social, economic and environmental effects of Plan objectives, policies and their alternatives. In addition to the SA Framework and its subsequent use in the assessment of the Plan, the SA Scoping report also helped to inform Spatial Policy officers of the key sustainability issues that the Plan should seek to address at the very start of its preparation.</p> |
| | Interim Sustainability Appraisal of the County Durham Plan Report- Issues and Options (2016) | <p>The County Durham Plan Issues and Options report identified high level strategic issues and plan options relating to how much development is needed in County Durham and how it should be broadly distributed. The Interim SA report set out the findings of its assessment of these options and ensured that additional options that had not been previously considered were included and assessed e.g. a New Town option in relation to how new housing should be distributed. The findings of the Interim SA report helped to influence the selection of the preferred strategic, spatial options in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Quantity of housing (however, please note that the Government introduced a new, standard methodology for calculating housing need following the production of the 2016 report) ● Distribution of housing ● Employment land needs ● Spatial approach to additional minerals working (for carboniferous limestone, sand and gravel and natural building and roofing stone) ● Future waste management provisioning |
| | Interim Habitats Regulations Assessment of the County Durham Plan Issues and Option (2018) | <p>The interim HRA report established the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identified ways in which the County Durham Plan could impact Natura 2000 sites (impact pathways); ● Determined which Natura 2000 sites should be included in the HRA; and ● Identified which strategic Plan options would increase the risk of Likely Significant Effects to Natura 2000 sites occurring if developed further <p>This report therefore helped to inform Spatial Policy of the key planning issues likely to affect Natura 2000 sites and aspects that should be taken into account, particularly in relation to developing options around housing sites and mineral sites further.</p> |

| Plan Iteration | Accompanying SA & HRA Work | How SA and HRA Reports were Taken into Account |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| Preferred Options (2018) | Sustainability Appraisal Preferred Options Report (2018) | <p>The Preferred Options SA report set out detailed findings and made recommendations following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SA of further strategic, spatial options that were developed as a result of consultation responses, further evidence collation and changes made by the Government to national planning policy; • The SA of proposed site allocations and their alternatives to deliver against the selected preferred spatial option; • The SA of alternative approaches to managing development that could come forward over the Plan period; and • The SA of Preferred Option policies <p>In general, the preferred strategic, spatial policy and development management policy approaches and site allocations that were taken forward in the County Durham Plan were those that performed more positively or at least as well against the SA objectives than the rejected options, although in a small number of cases other planning considerations determined that other options should be taken forward. In addition, the majority of the SA recommendations relating to amending the wording of draft policies to ensure they aligned better with sustainability objectives were accepted. The SA report also documented the justification in instances where it was not possible to accept SA recommendations.</p> |
| | Habitats Regulations Assessment of the County Durham Plan Preferred Options (2018) | <p>The Preferred Options HRA included the screening of additional options generated as part of the Plan making process and helped, in particular to inform decisions on the selection of housing sites (for example, no sites within 0.4km of a Natura 2000 site were allocated) and provide the information on likely effects and need for further HRA in the event that certain mineral sites were pursued in the Plan.</p> |
| Pre-Submission Draft (2019) | Sustainability Appraisal Report Pre-Submission Draft (2019) | <p>The Pre-Submission Draft SA report set out detailed findings and made recommendations following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SA of additional reasonable alternatives that were developed following the consultation at the Preferred Options Stage of Plan preparation; and • The SA of all Plan policies, highlighting where significant changes had been made to the previous Preferred Option version. <p>As for the Preferred Options stage of Plan development, the decisions made by Spatial Policy officers regarding the selection of reasonable alternatives, policy wording and other mitigating measures broadly aligned with the SA recommendations made at this Pre-Submission stage.</p> |
| | Pre-Submission Habitats Regulations Assessment of the County Durham Plan (2019) | <p>The Pre-Submission HRA report set out the further screening assessment of options and County Durham Plan policies and ensured that the wording of policies reflected and incorporated the necessary safeguards for County Durham's Natura 2000 sites. This report also set out the outcomes of the Appropriate Assessment and established the</p> |

| Plan Iteration | Accompanying SA & HRA Work | How SA and HRA Reports were Taken into Account |
|---|--|---|
| | | <p>coastal avoidance mitigation strategy. This mitigation strategy and its requirements were then incorporated into the County Durham Plan and its Housing Allocations and Internationally Designated Sites policies.</p> |
| <p>Main Modifications Document (2020)</p> | <p>Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment of Main Modifications (2020)</p> | <p>A number of Main Modifications to the County Durham Plan were proposed by the Council in response to the Local Plan Inspector’s questions and Action Points raised throughout the Examination in Public process. The Main Modifications SA and HRA Report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Determined whether the proposed Main Modifications required further Sustainability Appraisal and/or Habitats Regulations Assessment); and ● Where further assessment was required, assessed the differences in predicted sustainability outcomes between the Pre-Submission Draft version of the County Durham Plan and the proposed Main Modification. <p>All Main Modifications were screened with a total of 15 policies subject to further SA, due to the scale or content of changes proposed. No further HRA was required.</p> <p>Notwithstanding some negative implications and loss of some previously predicted benefits, the proposed Main Modifications were considered to improve the sustainability performance of the County Durham Plan overall. The majority of the proposed modifications are likely to result in positive impacts or would no longer result in negative impacts. The proposed modifications also improve positive cumulative effects against some social SA objectives and reduce the number of monitoring requirements previously identified by the SA.</p> <p>The Main Modifications SA report was sent to the Planning Inspector for consideration.</p> |

4 How Consultation Responses on the Environmental Reports have been taken into account

4.0.1 At each stage of the County Durham Plan's development, an SA Report and HRA was published alongside the Plan for consultation with the public and the consultation bodies specifically referred to in legislation. For SA Reports this includes Historic England, the Environment Agency and Natural England. For HRA reports this includes Natural England as the appropriate nature conservation body.

4.0.2 In relation to the HRA process, Natural England provided comment on each HRA report and the associated Developer Guidance and Requirements document. The views of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) were also taken into account. In general, the responses and additional duty to co-operate meetings held ensured that:

- Full consideration was given to a broad number of Natura 2000 sites so that the HRA included the correct sites
- The types of impact pathway to be taken into account throughout the HRA were robust;
- The HRA took account of changes in the way that mitigating measures can be taken into account; and
- The methodology for the coastal avoidance and mitigation strategy was robust.

4.0.3 The consultation responses, meeting outcomes and the Council's response are documented in full in the Pre-Submission HRA report (Appendix A).

4.0.4 As the SEA Directive requires this Adoption Statement to summarise how any opinions expressed by the public and the consultation bodies in relation the SA have been taken into account, the remainder of this section provides greater detail on the responses received in relation to each SA report.

SA Scoping Report (2016)

4.0.5 Consulting on the scope of the Sustainability Appraisal helped to ensure that the scope and level of detail included in the sustainability appraisal was sufficiently robust to support the assessment of the County Durham Plan. The statutory consultees responded to the February 2016 Scoping Report consultation with some additional supporting data to improve the environmental baseline information and some suggested additions to the SA Framework and its sub-decision making criteria relating to flood risk. The additional data was subsequently added to the baseline information and the additions to the SA Framework were made. Overall, the statutory consultees were content that the outcomes of the Scoping stage were robust and would support the assessment of the Plan.

4.0.6 In addition to the SA Scoping report, the statutory consultees were also consulted upon the housing site assessment criteria that was developed. Overall, Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency considered the criteria to be detailed and robust, providing a good balance between social, economic and environmental considerations. In addition, the fact that weighting was not applied favourably to one factor over another (e.g. economic considerations over environmental) was considered to be in conformity with the principles of sustainable development. A summary of further responses provided are as follows:

- **Historic England** advised that 'proximity' criteria should not be the sole determinant of whether development has the potential to impact upon the setting of designated or non designated heritage assets and rather the impact upon factors that make the heritage asset significant should be taken into account. Accordingly, expert input from the Council's heritage and archaeology teams to the assessment process was employed.
- **Natural England**, in addition to signposting to useful information sources, advised that impacts to European protected wildlife sites could occur beyond 1 km. The buffer zones and their application were amended to reflect the findings of the Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Plan as they emerged.
- **The Environment Agency** suggested a tweak to the criteria regarding surface water flooding and flood zones which was made for accuracy purposes.

Interim SA Report - Issues and Options (2016)

4.0.7 The Interim SA Report was subject to a six week consultation period alongside the County Durham Plan Issues and Options document. Consultation commenced in June 2016 and the responses received from the statutory consultees raised no concerns with the Sustainability Appraisal. Other responses, arising from one organisation related to the inclusion of transport and employment evidence as part of the SA which were not available at the time of assessment but were subsequently considered as part of further, ongoing and iterative SA work.

Sustainability Appraisal Preferred Options Report (2018)

4.0.8 The SA Preferred Options Report was subject to a six week consultation period alongside the County Durham Plan Preferred Options document. Consultation commenced in June 2018 and no concerns were raised by the statutory consultees in relation to the Sustainability Appraisal. Natural England highlighted new information arising from Defra's 25 year Environment Plan, along with increased emphasis on achieving net gains in biodiversity which were taken into account in the remaining SA work. The only other responses received, re-iterated the legal manner in which SA should be undertaken which was duly noted and a further response disagreed with the SA findings in relation to the SA of the Sustainable Communities housing distribution option. The SA of this option was reviewed by the Principal Sustainability officer within the Low Carbon Economy Team but it was not considered necessary to make any changes to the original SA outcomes. The justification for this was published as part of the Council's consultation response.

Sustainability Appraisal Report: Pre-Submission Draft (2019)

4.0.9 The Pre-Submission Draft SA Report underwent public consultation from 25th January to 8th March 2019 alongside the County Durham Plan Pre-Submission Draft. All responses collected that were 'duly made' were submitted for consideration by the Examination Inspector. No concerns were raised by the statutory consultees in relation to the Sustainability Appraisal as part of their response. Other public consultation responses for the Pre-Submission SA Report were analysed with comments focused primarily on:

- Re-iteration of disagreement with SA findings in relation to the SA of the Sustainable Communities housing distribution;
- The appraisal of specific housing sites discounted from allocation in the County Durham Plan;

- Assessment of alternatives to the Durham City Northern Relief Road and Western Relief Road; and
- Consideration of carbon emissions in the SA of certain minerals policies.

4.0.10 The consultation responses were taken into account by the Inspector when reaching his decision as to Main Modifications required to make the Plan sound (IR/36).

Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulations Assessment of Main Modifications (2020)

The Main Modifications underwent public consultation from the 26th May to the 21st July 2020. The consultation responses made on the Main Modifications and accompanying SA and HRA report were taken into account by the Inspector when reaching his decision as to Main Modifications required to make the Plan sound (IR/36).

5 Why the Adopted County Durham Plan was chosen in light of Reasonable Alternatives

5.0.1 The SEA Directive requires the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme (i.e. the emerging County Durham Plan) and reasonable alternatives to it, to be identified, described and evaluated and that an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with is included within the Environmental/SA Report. The SEA Directive further states that to be considered as reasonable alternatives, options (e.g. alternative policy approaches or site allocations) must relate to the plan or programmes’ corresponding objectives and geographical scope. To be eligible for consideration in the SA process, reasonable alternatives therefore needed to be:

- Realistic, in that they are plausible, deliverable alternatives which could be implemented and are consistent with relevant national and other policy frameworks;
- Related to the objectives of the emerging Plan and associated issues the Plan is seeking to address; and
- Within the geographical scope of the emerging Plan, i.e. any reasonable alternatives would need to relate to the distribution or characteristics of future development within County Durham

5.0.2 The SA Reports therefore documented, at each stage of Plan preparation:

- Narrative on the alternatives to each Plan issue, including those proposed through consultation and identification of reasonable alternatives to be taken forward for assessment;
- Assessment findings related to each reasonable alternative and recommendations; and
- Outline of the reasons given by Spatial Policy officers for selecting the reasonable alternative taken forward.

5.0.3 The following table provides an overview of the reasonable alternatives identified, those selected over the course of Plan preparation work, respective alignment with SA recommendations and any change to the approach selected following Main Modifications made to the County Durham Plan:

Table 4 Reasonable Alternatives Overview

| Reasonable Alternatives | Reasonable Alternative Selected | Change in Approach Resulting from Main Modifications |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Quantity of Development - Housing</p> <p>A. Do not make an adjustment to the quantity of housing to be allocated in the Plan</p> <p>B. Make an upward adjustment to the quantity of housing allocated to account for the potential non delivery of housing commitments.</p> | <p>Option B</p> <p>In recognition that a significant proportion of the new houses which will contribute to meeting needs are already committed either on sites under construction or sites with planning permission which have not commenced and that these commitments are significant in the context meeting housing needs in County Durham.</p> <p>The option selected aligned with SA recommendations.</p> | <p>No change in approach, albeit a more precise lapse rate adjustment has been applied.</p> |

| Reasonable Alternatives | Reasonable Alternative Selected | Change in Approach Resulting from Main Modifications |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Spatial Approach to Housing Distribution</p> <p>A. Main Town Focus B. Sustainable Communities C. Sustainable Communities with Central Durham Villages D. Wider Dispersal E. New Town</p> | <p>Option B</p> <p>The Sustainable Communities approach was selected as the approach most likely to ensure County Durham's housing needs are met and that the County Durham Plan promotes sustainable patterns of growth</p> <p>The option selected aligned with SA recommendations.</p> | <p>None</p> |
| <p>Sustainable Communities without Green Belt</p> <p>15 areas of search beyond the outer Green Belt boundary were assessed.</p> | <p>None of the potential areas of search were able to identify suitable or deliverable sites.</p> | <p>None</p> |
| <p>Housing Land Allocations</p> <p>SA informed the site selection process by assessing over 1,700+ potential sites and providing a conclusion on social, economic and environmental impacts, significant issues and an overall score.</p> | <p>The Reasonable Alternatives selected are presented within Policy 4: Housing Allocations. In the majority of cases, sites which performed well in sustainability terms were allocated. However, where better performing sites in terms of sustainability were not allocated, Spatial Policy officers provided the justification for this (Please see the Pre-Submission SA Report - tables 12-20). The justification for not allocating these sites largely related to issues concerning site availability site or that they had since received planning permission.</p> | <p>No change to the sites allocated. Main Modifications related to the inclusion of additional mitigation requirements for five of the allocated housing sites.</p> |
| <p>Durham City's Sustainable Urban Extensions</p> <p>13 strategic sites, adjoining Durham City were assessed.</p> | <p>Allocation of Sniperley Park and Sherburn Road</p> <p>In accordance with evidence presented in the case for Exceptional Circumstances and the conclusion that only two of the sites adjoining Durham City assessed have the potential to deliver a strategic level of housing in accordance with the Spatial Strategy. The justification for discounting particular sites was presented in the Exceptional Circumstances Note (Section 9).</p> <p>The options selected aligned with SA recommendations.</p> | <p>No change to the sites allocated. Main Modifications related to the effective creation of a linear park and removal of criteria to reflect that the Durham City Northern Relief Road and Western Relief Road are no longer included in the Plan.</p> |
| <p>Quantity of Development - Employment Land</p> | <p>Combination of options B,C and D</p> | <p>None</p> |

| Reasonable Alternatives | Reasonable Alternative Selected | Change in Approach Resulting from Main Modifications |
|--|--|--|
| <p>A. Maintain current supply (Business as Usual) - 755 ha B. Labour demand - 114.8 ha C. Labour supply - 121.1 ha D. Past Take-up Rates - 269.5 ha</p> | <p>Planning Practice Guidance identifies that Local Planning Authorities should develop an estimate of future land requirements by taking into account a range of forecasts and data sources (both qualitative and quantitative). In that respect Option A was discounted primarily because it would result in a significant over-supply based on employment demand forecasting. None of the other forecasting techniques identify a need for similar levels of employment over the Plan period. On this basis the Employment Land Review has used options B, C and D to provide its recommendation for employment land requirements over the plan period.</p> <p>The SA recommended option D but accepted the justification provided by Spatial Policy officers that a combination of different forecasts needed to be applied to determine future employment land requirements as established within Planning Practice Guidance.</p> | |
| <p>Extent of Aykley Heads Employment Site</p> <p>A. Only reusing existing land currently used for employment, excluding any Green Belt land. B. As above but also including land at County Hall car park currently in the Green Belt. C. As above but also including former police leisure centre and playing fields currently in the Green Belt. D. As above but only use Green Belt land when other areas have been redeveloped.</p> | <p>Option B</p> <p>The exceptional circumstances to justify the removal of the car park from Green Belt include the unique economic opportunities a strategic employment site in a sustainable location brings in terms of the creation of a large number of more and better jobs and the opportunity to enhance the contribution that this site makes to the Conservation Area and the setting of the historic core. In addition as this area would act as a gateway for the site, linking it to the city centre and the station, its sensitive development would be important to the eventual success of the entire site.</p> <p>The SA recommended option D but accepted the justification provided above by Spatial Policy officers.</p> | <p>No change to the inclusion of land at County Hall car park as part of the Aykley Heads site. Main Modifications related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensuring the provision of a readily recognisable and permanent Green Belt boundary; ● Ancillary uses of the site; ● Financial contributions towards playing field provision; and ● Limiting the provision of car parking |
| <p>Approach to Development on Unallocated Sites in Built Up Areas</p> | <p>Option A</p> <p>This option was considered to provide the greatest clarity and consistency with the policy relating to development in the countryside.</p> | <p>The Main Modifications introduce a change in approach to the</p> |

| Reasonable Alternatives | Reasonable Alternative Selected | Change in Approach Resulting from Main Modifications |
|---|---|---|
| <p>A. Proposals upon land on the edge of a settlement should be regarded as development in the countryside</p> <p>B. Proposals upon land on the edge of a settlement should be regarded as development in the built up area where they adjoin a settlement</p> <p>C. Proposals upon land on the edge of a settlement should be regarded as development in the built up area where they are well contained by existing built development</p> | <p>Exceptions to development beyond the built up area are set out in other policies within the Plan.</p> <p>The option selected aligned with SA recommendations.</p> | <p>consideration of development proposals on land outside of built up areas which are well-related to a settlement. The approach now most closely resembles option B and has been selected in order to increase the flexibility of the Plan, including in terms of responding to changing circumstances relating to the supply of housing land and by doing so, increase levels of windfall development over the Plan period.</p> |
| <p>Development in the Countryside</p> <p>A. Define Individual settlement boundaries beyond which development will not be permitted</p> <p>B. Develop criteria based policy to restrict development in the open countryside</p> <p>C. As for option A but with the addition of exceptions policies to allow development outside of settlement boundaries where certain exceptions are met.</p> <p>D. As for option B but with the addition of exceptions policies to allow development which is contrary to criteria based policy where certain exceptions are met.</p> | <p>Option D</p> <p>This option provides appropriate flexibility to cater for the varied characteristics of settlements and countryside locations within the county whilst at the same time not prohibiting local communities from defining specific boundaries within their neighbourhood plan. This approach also sets out specific criteria for securing sustainable development relating to the scope of uses and development proposals that can reasonably be expected in the countryside, whilst at the same time safeguarding against harmful effects arising.</p> <p>The option selected aligned with SA recommendations.</p> | <p>None</p> |
| <p>Rural Housing and Employment Exception Sites</p> <p>Should exceptions be made for:</p> | <p>Option B</p> <p>The County Durham Employment Land Review (ELR) suggests that there is only very modest demand for employment land in areas away</p> | <p>Specialist housing is also included as a rural exception.</p> |

| Reasonable Alternatives | Reasonable Alternative Selected | Change in Approach Resulting from Main Modifications |
|--|--|---|
| <p>A. Affordable housing only</p> <p>B. Affordable housing and employment</p> | <p>from the county's identified economic market areas and larger towns. Allocations of employment land in the most rural parts of the county are therefore limited. Indeed, in many cases large plots on industrial estates do not necessarily meet the needs of modern rural based businesses. However, the Council wishes to support economic growth and the expansion of local businesses that are appropriate to the unique circumstances within rural areas in addition to addressing affordable housing needs.</p> <p>The option selected aligned with SA recommendations.</p> | |
| <p>Addressing Housing Need</p> <p>A. Allow developers to make their own decisions on house types and building standards</p> <p>B. Require developers to build a proportion (10%) of houses within housing schemes to the new optional building regulations standard aimed at making homes more accessible and adaptable</p> <p>C. Require developers to build bungalows, level access flats, multi-generational housing, sheltered housing or extra care as a proportion (10%) of all new housing developments</p> <p>D. Allocation of sites specifically for older persons housing</p> | <p>Option C</p> <p>Option C was selected as the best way to meet the housing needs of older people as it aligns with the evidence base as set out in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment and the SA.</p> <p>The option selected aligned with SA recommendations.</p> | <p>The Main Modification requires 66% of properties, on sites of 5 units or more, to be built to Building Regulations Requirement M4 (2) (accessible and adaptable dwellings). The Main Modification, also requires that of the 66% built to the M4 (2) requirement, 10% would also need to be of a design and type that will increase the housing options for older people e.g. level access bungalows etc.</p> <p>In effect, the Main Modifications significantly increase the proportion of new housing that will be accessible and adaptable and will therefore better cater for the needs of an ageing population and for those with disabilities.</p> |

| Reasonable Alternatives | Reasonable Alternative Selected | Change in Approach Resulting from Main Modifications |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Durham City Sustainable Transport</p> <p>A. Maintain business as usual conditions</p> <p>B. Implement sustainable travel measures outlined in the Durham City Sustainable Delivery Plan (DCSTDP), reallocate space to sustainable modes on Millburngate Bridge and provide a Northern Relief Road (NRR).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● B(i) - As for option B but the alignment of the NRR utilises the Belmont Viaduct ● B(ii) - As for option B but the alignment of the NRR requires a new crossing of the River Wear ● B(iii) - As for option B but with an ECML over-bridge ● B(iv) - As for option B but with an ECML underpass <p>C. Introduce a Western Relief Road (WRR)</p> <p>D. Implement options B and C</p> | <p>Option D with the alignments associated with Bi,ii,iii and iv safeguarded</p> <p>Due to the forecast impacts of the two relief roads in isolation, owing to the strategic movements they serve, greater benefits were considered to be achieved by implementing B and C in combination rather than in isolation.</p> <p>There were two possible routes for the Northern Relief Road from the A690 to the Red House roundabout. One option would require a new bridge over the River Wear whilst the other would utilise the existing Belmont Viaduct. Due to the uncertainty over the precise route and the timing of the work needed to determine the preferred route, both alternative routes (including those related to the ECML) were shown as safeguarded on the policies map.</p> <p>The option selected aligned with SA recommendations subject to further specialist environmental assessment.</p> | <p>The Main Modifications remove the proposals for a Northern Relief road and Western Relief road for Durham City. The modifications have been made in order to align with the Inspector's recommendation that their benefits, individually and collectively, do not outweigh their harm.</p> <p>The new approach is a variant on Options A and B i.e. maintain business as usual conditions and implement sustainable travel measures without Relief Roads.</p> |
| <p>Allocating and Safeguarding Transport Routes and Facilities</p> <p>A. Do not safeguard the route of the Barnard Castle Relief Road</p> <p>B. Safeguard the route of the Barnard Castle Relief road</p> | <p>Option A</p> <p>The route of the Barnard Castle corridor of interest has not been safeguarded in the Plan due to uncertainties around its funding.</p> <p>The option selected aligned with SA recommendations.</p> | <p>None - Please note that whilst the Main Modification removes reference to a corridor of interest for a possible future Barnard Castle Relief road, there is no overall change to the approach taken as unlike a safeguarded route, a corridor of interest has limited planning status.</p> |
| <p>Sustainable Design in the Built Environment</p> | <p>Combination of Options B, D and E is required. Option C is encouraged.</p> | <p>None</p> |

| Reasonable Alternatives | Reasonable Alternative Selected | Change in Approach Resulting from Main Modifications |
|--|--|--|
| <p>A. Option A: Have no prescribed energy target for development</p> <p>B. Option B: Incorporation of 10% carbon reduction target for all new development</p> <p>C. Option C: Incorporate requirement to deliver the Home Quality Mark (HQM)</p> <p>D. Option D: Incorporate requirement to include BREEAM requirement for non-domestic development</p> <p>E. Adoption of Government internal space standards</p> <p>F. Option F: Do not adopt Government internal space standards</p> | <p>The National Planning Policy Framework confirms that it is reasonable to consider a range of measures that could assist in moving to a 'low carbon future' and it has been confirmed that local authorities can set higher standards in their local plan documents. Options B, D and E have been taken forward in the Plan. Option C has been included in the supporting text as something which will be promoted. The options will all assist in helping to secure a 'low carbon future', through future proofing, modelling and measurement and is thus the selected alternative.</p> <p>The options selected mostly align with SA recommendations. SA recommended an amalgamation of options B, C D and E.</p> | |
| <p>Hot Food Takeaways</p> <p>A. Do not intervene and allow all A5 uses</p> <p>B. Planning applications for A5 uses will only be approved where the proposal would not result in more than 5% of the premises within the centre being in A5 use and A5 uses within 400m of a school or college building will not be permitted.</p> | <p>Option B</p> <p>Considering the evidence provided by County Durham Public Health along with an understanding of national priorities on obesity, particularly childhood obesity, as well as how planning policy can have a positive effect, a proactive approach in accordance with Option B was deemed necessary to address the detrimental effects from hot food takeaways and promote healthier lifestyles.</p> <p>The option selected aligned with SA recommendations.</p> | None |
| <p>Locational Approach to the future supply of Primary Aggregates - Carboniferous Limestone</p> <p>A. Only outside of the North Pennines AONB and in areas not subject to international or national biodiversity designations</p> <p>B. As (Option A) but in addition proposals for extensions to existing quarries and the reworking of former</p> | <p>Option A</p> <p>The approach which has been chosen is a variant on Option A. It has been chosen in order to ensure that the approach of the County Durham Plan and the Minerals and Waste Policies and Allocations Document in this regard is fully in accordance with the NPPF. In particular, the NPPF advises Local Planning Authorities when determining planning applications as far as practical to provide for the maintenance of landbanks of non-energy</p> | None |

| Reasonable Alternatives | Reasonable Alternative Selected | Change in Approach Resulting from Main Modifications |
|--|---|--|
| <p>carboniferous limestone quarries within the AONB which have not been restored properly (provided they also create or safeguard employment, do not have an adverse impact on European sites and provide substantive landscape, biodiversity and biodiversity benefits) should also be considered</p> | <p>minerals from outside Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). In addition, the NPPF advises that planning permission should be refused for major developments in designated areas such as AONBs <i>except in exceptional circumstances</i> and where it can be demonstrated they are in the public interest.</p> <p>The SA recommended Option B but accepted the justification provided above by Spatial Policy officers.</p> | |
| <p>Locational Approach to the future supply of Primary Aggregates - Sand and Gravel</p> <p>A. Proposals to deepen existing magnesian limestone sites</p> <p>B. Proposals to laterally extend existing magnesian limestone sites</p> <p>C. New sand and gravel sites, working fluvial or glacial sand and gravels wherever the resources occurs</p> <p>D. New sand and gravel working fluvial or glacial sand and gravels in locations outside of environmentally important areas and in locations in close proximity to markets</p> <p>E. Don't allocate new sites or extend existing sites</p> | <p>Combination of Options A, B and D</p> <p>The approach selected reflects and takes into account the location of the mineral resource, the existing pattern of working, permitted reserves and need over the Plan period, and existing opportunities for additional extraction at existing magnesian limestone and basal permian sand sites.</p> <p>The options selected aligned with SA recommendations.</p> | <p>None</p> |
| <p>Locational Approach to working Natural Building and Roofing Stone</p> <p>A. Only outside of the North Pennines AONB and in areas not subject to international or national biodiversity designations</p> <p>B. Locate the majority of new working to areas outside of the North Pennines AONB and international or national biodiversity designations but allow some small scale working in certain</p> | <p>Option B</p> <p>Option B has been selected to ensure that a steady and adequate and diverse supply of natural building and roofing stone can be maintained in the long term. Option A whilst guiding new working to those areas of the County where natural building and roofing stone working is both currently and historically the most important and unconstrained by environmental designations could potentially be too restrictive and may prevent what would be otherwise acceptable planning permissions from being granted. In any event all relevant plan policies need to be met. For example, on this basis any planning application for mineral</p> | <p>None</p> |

| Reasonable Alternatives | Reasonable Alternative Selected | Change in Approach Resulting from Main Modifications |
|--|---|--|
| <p>circumstances within the AONB (Business as Usual Option)</p> <p>C. Do not provide any locational guidance</p> | <p>working within or in areas affecting the North Pennines AONB would also be considered against the Council's AONB policy. Option B has also been chosen because natural building and roofing stone is not a uniform commodity but instead has different uses as a product dependent upon its technical properties and aesthetic characteristics. As such it is important to have diverse sources of supply which ensures that the need for a steady, adequate and diverse supply of natural building and roofing stone can be met in the future.</p> <p>The option selected aligned with SA recommendations</p> | |
| <p>Preferred Areas for Future Carboniferous Limestone Extraction</p> <p>A. Hulands Quarry Eastern Extension</p> <p>B. Western Extension to Heights Quarry</p> <p>C. Area of Investigation east of Heights Quarry</p> <p>D. Washpool Craggs, Bollihope Common (and permanent mineral processing plant at Broadwood Quarry)</p> | <p>Options A and B</p> <p>The Spatial Policy Team undertook an assessment of all carboniferous limestone site allocations proposed through a call for sites which enabled the Council to conclude that an eastern extension to Hulands Quarry could be allocated in the Plan. New information has since been provided which enabled the council to reassess its reasons for not allocating a western extension to Heights Quarry in the Preferred Options version of the Plan. In particular, the Council was able to conclude that the proposal would have no adverse effect on the integrity of the North Pennines Moors Special Protection Area (SPA) due to the absence of qualifying bird species within the proposed extension area and its surrounds. In addition it was also considered that while the proposed allocation would constitute 'major development' within the AONB, that taking into account the requirements and relevant tests of the NPPF in relation to development within AONBs that the ongoing extraction of carboniferous limestone from this quarry would be in the public interest and the circumstances of the proposal were sufficient to justify an allocation being identified within the Local Plan.</p> <p>The options selected aligned with SA recommendations</p> | None |
| <p>Waste Management Provision</p> | <p>Option A</p> | None |

| Reasonable Alternatives | Reasonable Alternative Selected | Change in Approach Resulting from Main Modifications |
|---|--|--|
| <p>A. Make provision for all of County Durham’s Waste (net self-sufficiency).</p> <p>B. Make provision for all County Durham’s waste and as much as possible from elsewhere, in order to maximise economic and employment opportunities in waste management.</p> <p>C. Make provision for less waste than arises in County Durham, on the basis that a significant proportion will be managed outside the county.</p> | <p>The option selected is a variant of option A, as the intention is to aim for net self sufficiency, whilst recognising that the issue is cross boundary, dealt with at a regional level, with many streams coming in and out of the County. The approach complies with the EU Waste Framework Directive, which drives waste up the 'Waste Hierarchy'. Provision for future waste management in County Durham is based upon providing facilities to deal with the county's own waste arisings whilst acknowledging those flows which already exist (net self-sufficiency). In addition the County Durham Municipal Waste contract currently involves management routes outside the county. The strategy for residual Local Authority Collected Waste (LACW) therefore makes use of spare capacity within the region which will allow management of waste close to source and is more sustainable than providing strategic scale facilities unnecessarily within the county.</p> <p>The option selected aligns with SA recommendations</p> | |

6 How Significant Environmental and Sustainability Effects of the County Durham Plan will be Monitored

6.0.1 The SEA Directive and SA process requires the significant environmental effects of implementing the plan or programme to be monitored. Article 10 (1) of the Directive states:

"Each Party shall monitor the significant environmental, including health, effects of the implementation of the plans and programmes... in order, inter alia, to identify, at an early stage, unforeseen adverse effects and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action"

6.0.2 The Government’s latest SA Guidance in the National Planning Practice Guidance ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ states that details of the proposals for monitoring the significant effects of implementing the adopted Local Plan may be included in the Sustainability Appraisal report, the Post-Adoption Statement (i.e. this document) or in the Local Plan itself. This section therefore sets out the monitoring proposals and the measures that will be undertaken to address any unforeseen adverse effects. The monitoring proposals were previously presented in section 6 of the Pre-Submission SA report and were updated to reflect Main Modifications to the County Durham Plan in the Main Modifications SA Report.

6.0.3 The following monitoring proposals will:

- Provide baseline data for monitoring of the Plan;
- Monitor the significant effects of the Plan;
- Track any unforeseen effects;
- Assist in taking action to reduce adverse impacts; and
- Link to the HRA monitoring requirements ⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾

Table 5 Monitoring Proposals

| Relevant SA Objective | Monitoring Indicator | Target |
|--|---|--|
| To reduce the need to travel and promote use of sustainable transport options | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CO₂ emissions from transport 2. Total number of local passenger journeys on the bus network 3. % of employees walking or cycling to work 4. % of pupils walking, cycling or using public transport to school | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Year on year reductions in transport related CO₂ emissions 2. Bi-annual increases in passenger journeys 3. Increasing trend above the baseline figure 4. Increasing trend above the baseline figure |

ii Planning Practice Guidance Paragraph: 025 Reference ID: 11-025-20140306

iii Please note the HRA monitoring requirements are set out in detail in section 9 of the Pre-Submission HRA Report

| Relevant SA Objective | Monitoring Indicator | Target |
|---|--|--|
| | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Level of nitrogen dioxide at Durham City AQMA Provision of electric vehicle charging points | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Year on year reduction of nitrogen dioxide in AQMA Delivery in line with the Council's Parking and Accessibility guidelines |
| To reduce the causes of climate change | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of housing receiving a 'good' building for life accreditation Improvement in carbon emissions over building regulations in domestic development Reduction in carbon emissions within County Durham Installed renewable energy schemes | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 100% 'good' status 10% improvement in carbon emissions over building regulations Carbon emissions reduction of 75% by 2030 (based upon 1990 levels) Increasing trend above the baseline figure |
| To respond and enable adaptation to the inevitable impacts of climate change | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing provision of green infrastructure % of major developments which include SuDS | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery in line with standards set out in the Open Space Needs Assessment 100% |
| To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> % of major proposals achieving net gains in biodiversity Area and condition of designated sites: international sites, SSSI, Local Sites and Local/National Nature Reserves Net loss of trees/woodlands/hedges as a result of new development Ancient woodland (ha) Impacts on the integrity of coastal internationally designated wildlife sites | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 100% Favourable / unfavourable recovering status No net loss of trees/woodlands/hedges No loss / deterioration without exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy No adverse impacts - implementation of HRA coastal avoidance strategy and associated monitoring measures |
| To protect and enhance the quality and character of landscape and townscape | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> No of major developments within the North Pennines AONB and Durham Heritage Coast | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Zero approved without demonstrating exceptional circumstances, public interest and for the Heritage Coast, compatibility with its special character |
| To protect and enhance cultural heritage & the historic environment | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Harm to, or loss of the significance of heritage assets No of proposals enhancing and better revealing the significance and understanding of heritage assets, including undiscovered archaeological features Number of Grade I and II* Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments and Conservation Areas on Historic England's 'Heritage at Risk' Register | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> No unjustified harm or loss of heritage asset Increasing trend above the baseline Decreasing number year on year |

| Relevant SA Objective | Monitoring Indicator | Target |
|--|--|---|
| To protect and improve air, water and soil resources | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Level of nitrogen dioxide at Durham City AQMA 2. Number of AQMA's in County Durham 3. Increase the number of water bodies improved as a direct consequence of new development; 4. Loss of best and most versatile agricultural land | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Year on year reduction of nitrogen dioxide in AQMA 2. No new or extensions to AQMA's declared 3. Increasing trend above the baseline figure 4. No unjustified loss and where significant loss could occur, a lack of alternatives to be demonstrated. |
| To reduce waste and encourage the sustainable and efficient use of materials | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. % of waste reduced, reused, recycled, composted and recovered 2. No of existing waste management facilities in County Durham | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increasing trend above the baseline figure 2. No significant loss in waste management facilities |
| To improve the sustainability of mineral extraction and use and reduce adverse impacts on communities and the environment⁽¹⁾ | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Extent of permitted reserves 2. Number of eligible schemes within Mineral Safeguarding Areas that are supported by a Mineral Assessment 3. No of proposals approved which sterilise areas underlain by high grade dolomite or lead to the use of these resources for lower grade purposes | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintenance of land banks for crushed rock and sand and gravel and 25 year stock of permitted reserves for brickworks 2. 100% 3. Zero |

1. Please note that the other environmental indicators identified in this table also relate to this SA objective

Appendix A Housing Site Assessment Criteria

Housing Site Assessment Criteria

| No | Indicator | Score User Guide | Score | Traffic Light | Data Source |
|--------------------------|--|--|-------|---------------|--------------------------|
| Social Indicators | | | | | |
| 1 | Within short walking distance to educational services/ facilities (a) Primary (b) Secondary School / 6 th Form (c) Post 18 education providers (college / university) | Within 400m | 4 | | GIS |
| | | 400m – 800m | 2.5 | | |
| | | 800m – 1.6km | 1 | | |
| | | Over 1.6km | 0 | | |
| | | Over 3km | 0 | | |
| 2 | Within catchment of a local centre or village that performs the role of a local centre | 0km-1km | 4 | | GIS |
| | | 1km – 2km | 3 | | |
| | | 2km – 3km | 2 | | |
| | | 3km – 4km | 1 | | |
| | | Beyond 4km | 0 | | |
| 3 | Within catchment of retail facilities / amenities provided by a town centre, district centre or retail park | 0km-1.6km | 4 | | GIS |
| | | 1.6km – 3km | 3 | | |
| | | 3-5km | 2 | | |
| | | 5-7km | 1 | | |
| | | Beyond 7km | 0 | | |
| 4 | Within short walking distance to health and recreational services/ facilities (a) GP (b) Leisure Centre/ Community Centre (c) Playing pitches/ designated amenity open space | Within 400m | 4 | | GIS |
| | | 400m – 800m | 2.5 | | |
| | | 800m – 1.6km | 1 | | |
| | | Over 1.6km | 0 | | |
| | | Over 3km | 0 | | |
| 5 | Impact on Public Rights of Way /Cycle Network | Site within 1 km of an existing PROW/Cycle network | 4 | | GIS |
| | | Unknown | 0 | | |
| | | PROW/Cycle Network lost/ unable to be diverted | 0 | | |
| 6 | Impact on Local Greenspace and Green Infrastructure (i.e. green space of recreational value, semi-natural greenspace and/ or likely be of high importance to local people e.g. village green) | Opportunity to improve or enhance | 4 | | GIS |
| | | No impact | 1 | | |
| | | Some adverse impact/ constraints | 0 | | |
| | | Significant adverse impact | 0 | | |
| 7 | Within catchment of a train station. | 0m-1.6km | 4 | | GIS |
| | | 1.6km – 3km | 3 | | |
| | | 3-5km | 2 | | |
| | | 5-7km | 1 | | |
| | | Beyond 7km | 0 | | |
| 8 | Bus transport accessibility analysis | 8/9 | 4 | | Passenger Transport Team |
| | | 6/7 | 3 | | |
| | | 5 | 2 | | |
| | | 3/4 | 1 | | |
| | | 0/1/2 | 0 | | |

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|--|---|-----|-------------|--------------------|
| 9 | Community Safety & Severance Issues | No severance issues with site/ services & facilities | 4 | Green | GIS |
| | | Severance issues with site/ services & facilities (major infrastructure or other obstacle) | 0 | Red | |
| 10 | Location of Site in relation to noise and air pollution/ 'nuisances' (a) identified congestion 'hotspot'/'A' road/ railway line / AQMA (b) quarry/ mineral working (c) landfill sites/ sewage treatment works/ waste transfer stations | No Impact | 4 | Green | GIS |
| | | Within 200 metres (for sewage treatment works make a note of actual distance as pertinent to mitigation required) | 0 | Red | |
| Economic Indicators | | | | | |
| 11 | Within catchment of key employment locations a) Main Town b) Retail Park c) Industrial Estate / Business / Science Park | 0m-1.6km | 4 | Green | GIS |
| | | 1.6km – 3km | 3 | Light Green | |
| | | 3-5km | 2 | Yellow | |
| | | 5-7km | 1 | Orange | |
| | | Beyond 7km | 0 | Red | |
| 12 | Within short walking distance to all employment locations a) Main Town b) Retail Park c) Industrial Estate / Business / Science Park d) Large employer (big four supermarket, hospital, County Hall etc) | Within 400m | 4 | Green | GIS |
| | | 400m – 800m | 2.5 | Light Green | |
| | | 800m – 1.6km | 1 | Yellow | |
| | | Over 1.6km | 0 | Orange | |
| | | Over 3km | 0 | Red | |
| 13 | Alleviate Deprivation (i.e. would development help to regenerate deprived areas) | Some areas in ward within top 10% most deprived nationally | 4 | Green | GIS |
| | | Some areas in ward within top 10-20% most deprived nationally | 2.5 | Light Green | |
| | | Some areas in ward within top 20-30% most deprived nationally | 1 | Yellow | |
| | | No areas in ward within top 30% most deprived nationally | 0 | Orange | |
| 14 | Mineral Safeguarding Zone | Not in a mineral safeguarding zone | 4 | Green | GIS |
| | | Within a mineral safeguarding zone | 0 | Red | |
| Environmental Indicators | | | | | |
| 15 | Location of site in relation to areas of nationally, locally designated or important biodiversity / geodiversity value (e.g. SSSI's National Nature Reserves, Local Nature Reserves, local wildlife sites, | 3km or over | 4 | Green | GIS / Ecology Team |
| | | 1.6km – 3km | 2.5 | Light Green | |
| | | 1 – 1.6 | 1 | Yellow | |
| | | 800m – 1km (local recreational pressure / | 0 | Orange | |

| | | | | | |
|----|--|---|-----|--|-------------------|
| | ancient woodland, areas where protected or priority species are known to be present, local ecological networks) | disturbance) Adjacent to/ within 800m of designated site (local recreational pressure / disturbance) | 0 | | |
| | | Within designated site or on site where BAP / protected species are known to be present (land take / disturbance) | 0 | | |
| 16 | Proximity to all European Protected Sites (within buffer, sites will require Appropriate Assessment as likely to have a significant impact on site integrity– do not allocate without undertaking appropriate assessment) | Beyond 400m | 4 | | GIS |
| | | Within 400m | 0 | | |
| 17 | Recreational Impact on Coastal European Sites (within buffer of Durham Coast SAC, Teesmouth and Cleveland Coast SPA or Northumbria Coast SPA, site will either require AA or contribution towards the creation of Suitable Alternative Greenspace) | Beyond 6km | 4 | | GIS |
| | | 400m-6km | 0 | | |
| 18 | Landscape Strategy | Urban/ developed (least sensitive) | 4 | | Landscape Section |
| | | Landscape Improvement Priority Area | 2.5 | | |
| | | Landscape Conservation Priority Area | 0 | | |
| | | Strategy: Conserve | 0 | | |
| 19 | Landscape and Visual Impact | Significant opportunity to enhance | 4 | | Landscape Section |
| | | Opportunity to enhance | 2.5 | | |
| | | Neutral Impact | 1 | | |
| | | Some adverse residual impact | 0 | | |
| | | Significant adverse residual Impact | 0 | | |
| 20 | Landscape Designations (i.e. does the site include or is it within a landscape designation such as AHLV, AONB, Ancient woodland, TPO) | Potential for positive impact on designation | 4 | | Landscape Section |
| | | No impact on designation | 1 | | |
| | | Some adverse impact on designation | 0 | | |
| | | Significant adverse impact on designation | 0 | | |
| 21 | Impact on Townscape | More likely to improve or enhance townscape | 4 | | GIS, Street View |
| | | Less likely to improve or enhance townscape due to location | 0 | | |
| | | Potential adverse impact (mitigation measures may be required) | 0 | | |

| | | | | | |
|----|--|--|-----|--|--------------------------------|
| 22 | Impact on Historic Environment Assets and Setting (including world heritage site, listed buildings, scheduled monuments, archaeology, historic battlefields, rig and furrow, conservations areas, registered parks and gardens, industrial heritage, pilgrimage routes, local historic interest etc.) | Opportunity to improve or enhance | 4 | | Heritage and Archaeology Teams |
| | | No known constraints (need arch survey if site is over 1ha) | 1 | | |
| | | Less than substantial harm / archaeological constraints known (survey/ excavation required) | 0 | | |
| | | Substantial harm or total loss of significance / archaeological remains best preserved in situ | 0 | | |
| 23 | Protection of Best/ Most Versatile Soils (Agricultural Land Classifications) | Loss of Grades 4 & 5 or not currently agricultural land | 4 | | GIS |
| | | Loss of Grade 3 (3a - good & 3b - moderate) | 0 | | |
| | | Loss of Grade 2 | 0 | | |
| | | Loss of Grade 1 | 0 | | |
| 24 | Avoid Land Liable to Flood (Flood Zones and Surface Water Flooding) | No or low risk of surface water flooding and not in flood zone 2 or 3 | 4 | | GIS - SFRA |
| | | Areas at medium risk from surface water flooding and /or flood zone 2 | 1 | | |
| | | Areas at high risk from surface water flooding and/ or Flood zone 3a | 0 | | |
| | | Functional Floodplain (FZ 3b) | 0 | | |
| 25 | Previously Developed Land/ Brownfield | Brownfield | 4 | | GIS/SHLAA Database |
| | | More than 50% brownfield | 1 | | |
| | | More than 50% greenfield | 0 | | |
| | | Greenfield | 0 | | |
| 26 | Waste Water Constraints | Development within headroom or only exceeded after 2025 | 4 | | Water-Cycle Study Data |
| | | Headroom exceeded 2020-25 | 2.5 | | |
| | | Headroom exceeded before 2020 | 1 | | |
| | | Already exceeds headroom | 0 | | |