



BRIDGEND COUNTY
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Sustainability Appraisal of the Bridgend Local Development Plan

Pre-Deposit Proposals

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

November 2008



Introduction

1. This report is the non-technical summary of the combined sustainability appraisal (SA) and strategic environmental assessment (SEA), of the Pre-Deposit Proposals of the Bridgend County Borough Council Local Development Plan (LDP). The detailed findings are shown in full in the main SA Report.
2. This non-technical summary is only intended to provide an overview of the findings of the appraisal, with more detail of the process and outputs included in the main report.
3. The full SA Report is being submitted alongside the Pre-Deposit Proposals document to provide the public and statutory consultees with the opportunity to express their opinions on both sets of documents. The purpose of the SA Report is also to allow consultees to get a understanding of what the Pre-Deposit Proposals may mean in terms of delivering the necessary sustainable development in the County Borough.
4. SA is a process starting prior to writing this SA Report, and which will continue following the LDP Pre-Deposit Proposals SA stage. This will include an SA and strategic environmental assessment (SEA) of the deposit LDP, A further SA Report will be made available for public consultation at that time also.

Sustainability appraisal stages

5. The SA has already been through several stages prior to the Pre-Deposit Proposals appraisal.

Scoping Report

6. As part of the statutory requirements for an SEA a scoping stage is necessary. This is a background document for the SA that includes:
 - a characterisation of the sustainability baseline of the County Borough, to identify key sustainability issues that should be addressed in the LDP
 - a review of other plans and programmes covering the County Borough that may influence SA and the LDP
 - a set of sustainability objectives to define sustainable development for the SA
 - a outline of the proposed methodology for SA.
7. The Scoping Report produced was made available to statutory consultees and stakeholders for comment, with responses taken into account in moving forward with the SA. The final scoping report can be found on the Bridgend County Borough LDP website.

Initial SA of the growth options report

8. A brief sustainability statement was prepared to show the relative sustainability impacts of implementing alternative housing growth options. This SA considered the likely implications of a low, medium and high growth rate. The intention was to help inform the Council on the final choice of growth option.

The sustainability objectives

9. A set of sustainability objectives have been developed for the SA. These objectives are based on agreed national definitions of sustainable development, but adapted using the information gathered at scoping to tailor them to the needs of the Bridgend LDP.
10. The purpose of the objectives is to provide a consistent definition of sustainable development for the SA process. These are then used as the basis for testing the emerging objectives, policies and proposals of the LDP, and to provide a check on whether these will help move towards implementing more sustainable development. The objectives are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Sustainability objectives for the SA of the Bridgend LDP

Concern	Objective
Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone	
Accessibility	To ensure an increase in accessibility to opportunities, transport and to all services and information in the County Borough.
Housing	To provide the opportunity for people to meet their housing needs
Health, safety and security	To improve overall levels of health and safety, including the sense of security, for all in the County Borough
Community	To maintain, promote and where suitable enhance, the distinctive character of the communities of Bridgend
Effective protection of the environment	
Biodiversity	To maintain and enhance the diversity and abundance of species, and safeguard areas of significant nature conservation value
Landscape	To maintain and enhance the quality and character of the landscape, including its contribution to the setting and character of settlements
Built Environment	To maintain and enhance the quality of the built environment, including the cultural/historic heritage
Prudent use of natural resources	
Air	To reduce all forms of air pollution in the interests of local air quality and the integrity of the atmosphere
Climate change	To ensure that new development takes into account the effects of climate change
Water	To maintain and improve the quality and quantity of ground waters, river waters and coastal and bathing waters
Land / Soil	To use land efficiently, retaining undeveloped land and bringing damaged land back into use
Minerals and waste	To maintain the stock of minerals and non renewable primary resources
Renewable energy	To increase the opportunities for energy generation from renewable energy sources
Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment	

Employment	To ensure that there is a vibrant local economy which is at the forefront of a wider regional economy and provide diversity of employment within the County Borough and support a culture of entrepreneurship
Wealth creation	To achieve a clear connection between effort and benefit, by making the most of local strengths, seeking community regeneration, and fostering economic activity

Sustainability appraisal of vision and objectives

11. The vision for the future of the County Borough in the LDP Pre-Deposit Proposals, supports the creation of a sustainable future for the County Borough. This addresses issues in a spatially specific way, demonstrating how it is hoped development will bring regeneration initiatives and sustainable development to the various towns and villages of the County Borough.
12. The objectives for the LDP correspond well with the sustainability objectives, covering all sustainability issues. However, there is a greater emphasis in LDP objectives on social and economic matters, than environmental matters. This is perhaps to be expected, given the particular characteristics of the County Borough, and there is nothing to suggest this represents that precedence will be given to these matters. However, there is the potential for conflict between environmental and natural resource protection and objectives on growth.

Sustainability appraisal of the growth options

13. **Housing:** The growth options for housing were originally appraised prior to preparation of the Pre-Deposit Proposals. The appraisal raised some issues related to how realistic the options for growth levels were, particularly given the substantial amount of housing land that is already committed for development.
14. The chosen housing growth level appears compatible with past levels of growth, and therefore should be achievable. There may be inevitable conflicts with delivering growth in relation to natural resource use and land take, however, the extent of these impacts will depend on measures put in place to mitigate against them.
15. **Employment:** Employment growth options have been appraised for the first time as part of the Pre-Deposit Proposals. To achieve the more sustainable distribution of employment development it would be preferable to identify, and allocate, fewer sites for employment. The sustainability appraisal identifies that over-allocation of land may lead to employment growth in less sustainable locations, based on market demand only. Over-allocation could mean:
 - development happens in places where it is not required to deliver regeneration benefits, missing the opportunities for renewal in some towns or villages
 - sites in locations that have poor public transport, or are in peripheral locations, are developed first based only on good access to the M4,

and not reducing car travel and commuting

- greenfield land allocations are taken up in preference to previously developed or town centre sites, with impacts for the sustainable use of land, and possibly upon biodiversity and landscape character
16. Therefore, the sustainability appraisal is in support of lower options for employment land allocations. Phasing employment land release may help prioritise those sites that would contribute to the spatial strategy and deliver sustainable development, while still allowing a higher land allocation.

Sustainability appraisal of the spatial strategy options

17. Regardless of the level of growth chosen for housing or employment it is likely to be the distribution of development that has the greatest impacts. The Pre-Deposit Proposals put forward three approaches for this spatial distribution:
- economic led
 - regeneration led, or
 - population and settlement led.
18. The preferred approach is to pursue regeneration, and if successfully delivered the sustainability appraisal identifies that this is likely to bring benefits to the County Borough. These could include, helping create and support new sustainable communities and addressing the needs of more peripheral settlements. It should also help avoid some adverse impacts of the alternatives, such as a large requirement for development on greenfield land, under the economic led option, and maintaining existing patterns of development that have led to the creation of unsustainable communities under the population and settlement led option. However, the caveat to these findings are that little information was available on how the alternatives would be implemented, including the quantity of development, so drawing firm conclusions on relative sustainability was not possible.

Sustainability appraisal conclusions and recommendations

19. There is an evident need in the County Borough for the delivery of development to aid regeneration of communities. The plan area also plays a role in delivering employment to serve a wider south east Wales function, including supporting Cardiff. The delivery of development, necessary to realise the strategic objectives and vision for the Local Development Plan, will primarily be by private developers. However, the current economic slowdown may adversely impact delivery in the next few years. This will need to be monitored to allow for contingency plans to be put in place, or alternative solutions found to secure sustainable deliver. LDP implementation should ensure achieving sustainability and regeneration aims are not compromised by the current economic climate.
20. There will be some inevitable sustainability impacts through delivering the growth levels promoted through the Pre-Deposit Proposals. These will be predominantly related to environmental sustainability resulting from the land-

take, natural resource use and environmental protection and possible increase in car trips. There will, however, be economic and social benefits from the strategy, if fully delivered.

21. There are a number of challenges to achieving environmental sustainability presented by the levels of growth and the strategy for the LDP. Without provision of an adequate and reliable public transport network, car dependency and use will increase. This will be from the distribution of development around the County Borough, the peripheral location of some of the strategic allocated sites, and the simple impact of there being more households, and therefore more cars. Increased car travel can have negative sustainability impacts related to increased congestion that can have adverse economic and health effects; and increasing air pollution contributing to climate change and health impacts. Development in the M4 corridor also risks worsening air quality in relation to increased movements of heavy good vehicles.
22. Part of the solution to this is locating housing and employment near one another. This is an aim for the Bridgend LDP, although the strategy as it is set out may not be entirely effective in this, given the large amount of potential employment sites that may be developed out of step with housing provision. It would also be unrealistic to assume that co-location alone would reduce car use, as people will always need to travel between settlements to access jobs, services and for shopping. Therefore, the LDP will need to be influential in aiming for a modal shift away from car use, wherever possible. This may require the LDP being delivered in conjunction with other strategies that will deliver improved public transport and high quality cycle networks. It will also be the role of the LDP to lower demand for car use by controlling the layout and form of development, to reduce car dependence, and setting strict maximum car parking standards and requiring developers and businesses to contribute to achieving a modal shift.
23. A further challenge to achieving more sustainable development, will be from the land required to deliver the growth proposed in the Pre-Deposit Proposals. There is likely to be an environmental impact from development, and therefore policies will need to be in place to guide development, in form and location, to avoid adverse impacts on biodiversity, landscape character, safeguarding minerals, the built environment and to avoid flood risk. Of particular importance is the need to avoid harm to the internationally designated nature conservation sites in the County Borough.
24. New development will also require good quality design principles to be in place. Using up-to-date design guidance and development briefs can help deliver high quality development, aesthetically, and in use of natural resources. This will need to take into account, on-site renewable energy generation, sourcing of materials, water and energy efficiency.
25. The strategic policies may need to be further developed to include the elements necessary to deliver the vision and objectives for the LDP. Currently, the policies may lack some of the detail that could be influential in helping make decisions about delivering a sustainable strategy. It is important that these strategic policies form the basic framework for giving development consents, with the remaining policies of the LDP providing the detail necessary to fine tune development proposals to avoid adverse impacts

and deliver benefits. Therefore, policies must include the detail necessary to be used as the basis for granting or refusing planning applications related to delivering the vision for the County Borough.

26. The mitigation measures suggested in the main SA Report should also be implemented to help avoid, or mitigate against potential adverse impacts of implementing the strategy. These include modifying policies to include targets, site selection for allocations, securing planning contributions or obligations and using other plans and strategies in combination with the LDP to deliver development.