

IS A SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL DOCUMENT REQUIRED FOR THE MINSTER QUARTER AREA DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK?

BACKGROUND

Under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, there is a requirement to carry out Sustainability Appraisal of planning policy documents. The Sustainability Appraisal process fulfils the requirements of a European Directive (2001/42/EC) for Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA). Sustainability Appraisal fully incorporates the European SEA requirements, but expands it to also take account of social and economic matters.

Until 2009, the requirements applied both to Development Plan Documents (such as the Core Strategy or any site allocations documents) and Supplementary Planning Documents (e.g. site briefs). However, the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2009 removed the requirement to carry out a Sustainability Appraisal of SPDs. The accompanying commentary advised that in most cases, the Sustainability Appraisal of Development Plan Documents (in this case, the Local Plan) which the SPD supplements is sufficient, but that local planning authorities should check to make sure that this Appraisal picks up the relevant impacts.

The Minster Quarter Area Development Framework supplements the new Reading Borough Local Plan. It relates to the area allocated in the Local Plan as 'CR12d, Broad Street Mall' and 'CR12e, Hosier Street' within 'CR12: West Side Major Opportunity Area'.

The pre-submission version of the Local Plan was subject to recent Sustainability Appraisal in November 2017. This appraisal looked at all policies and site allocations in the Local Plan and appraised them against a range of alternative options. The appraisals of 'CR12: West Side Major Opportunity Area', 'CR12d, Broad Street Mall' and 'CR12e, Hosier Street' are the main relevant sections, but the appraisals of other policies will also be significant.

This note lists the various requirements and proposals of the Minster Quarter Area Development Framework, and shows where in the Sustainability Appraisal of the Local Plan these issues have been identified.

APPRAISAL OF THE MINSTER SQUARE AREA DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK PROPOSALS

This section shows how the various elements of the Minster Square Area Development Framework have already been subject to Sustainability Appraisal. The full sustainability appraisal referenced below is available on the Council's website¹ and full appraisal tables appear in the order of policies and site allocations the Local Plan.

Principle of high-density residential development (with some mixed uses at ground floor level)

Assessment of high-density residential development (with some mixed uses at ground floor level) and alternatives formed the focus of the appraisals of both CR12d, Broad Street Mall and CR12e, Hosier Street. High-density residential development was assessed against the alternatives of not allocating the site, developing only on top of the mall, mixed-use development with a greater emphasis on office development, retail-led mixed-use development and residential development only.

Land uses

¹ http://www.reading.gov.uk/media/8050/Sustainability-Appraisal-of-the-Presubmission-Local-Plan-1117/pdf/Sustainability_Appraisal_of_the_Presubmission_Local_Plan_1117.pdf

The fact that this area is a town centre location where high-density residential development is considered sustainable is appraised in CC6: Accessibility and Intensity of Development, H2: Density and Mix, RL1: Network and Hierarchy of Centres, RL2: Scale and Location of Retail, Leisure and Cultural Development, CR1: Definition of Central Reading, CR3: Public Realm in Central Reading, CR4: Leisure, Culture and Tourism in Central Reading, CR6: Living in Central Reading, CR10: Tall Buildings, and CR12: West Side Major Opportunity Area. Policy CR12: West Side Major Opportunity Area emphasises mixed uses including residential. CR12d: Broad Street Mall states that the site will include continued retail and leisure provision with residential and some potential for offices on upper floors. CR12e: Hosier Street states that new development will be primary residential, with some retail, leisure or other town centre uses and that the Hexagon will only be developed if a replacement facility is provided.

Housing mix

The Framework requires a mix of sizes and tenures according to policies within the Local Plan that were appraised during the Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal Process. These requirements are in line with H2: Density and Mix and CR6: Living in Central Reading.

Affordable housing

The requirements for affordable housing referenced in the Framework were assessed in the sustainability appraisal of Local Plan Policy H3: Affordable Housing.

High quality public realm and landscaping

A high quality public realm and landscaping throughout the area is assessed within Local Plan Policies CC7: Design and the Public Realm and CR3: Public Realm in Central Reading. The Minster Quarter Area Development Framework proposals are consistent with these policies.

The amount of overall development proposed

The fact that town centre locations are appropriate locations for high-density development was appraised in relation to Local Plan Policies CC6: Accessibility and Intensity of Development and H1: Provision of Housing. Additionally, the indicative amounts of potential residential units listed within Local Plan allocations CR12d: Broad Street Mall and CR12e: Hosier Street were taken into account during Sustainability Appraisal.

The principle of tall buildings in the Hosier Street Area

The Western Grouping (CR10b) is identified within Policy CR10: Tall Buildings. The impacts of this approach were therefore assessed in the Sustainability Appraisal of Policy CR10. A variety of alternatives, including limiting the scope for tall buildings and expanding the scope, were also appraised.

Overall massing strategy of the highest building located along the IDR, with heights gradually decreasing towards St Mary's Butts

The overall massing strategy articulated in the Framework is strongly rooted in the Local Plan. Policy CR10b makes it clear that the upper storeys of the taller structures should be set back and should not intrude on key views between Greyfriars Church and St Giles Church or the view from the open space in Hosier Street to St Mary's Church. This approach was therefore assessed in the Sustainability Appraisal of that policy.

Identification of active frontages

Policy CR7 relates to primary frontages and identifies where new frontages should be created. This policy was subject to Sustainability Appraisal. The frontages in the Framework are in line with this policy.

Approach to parking standards

The approach to parking standards for new development is contained in the Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD, adopted in 2011. This SPD was subject to sustainability appraisal. Additionally, TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging was subject to Sustainability Appraisal during the Local Plan process.

Transport, including improved pedestrian and cyclist access

Sustainable transport forms a central part of the Local Plan's overall vision. The various elements of transport proposed in the Framework were appraised through a range of transport policies. These include TR1: Achieving the Transport Strategy, TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters, TR4: Cycle Routes and Facilities and TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging.

Respect for and response to the historic environment

Conserving and enhancing the Borough's historic environment forms a central part of the Local Plan's overall vision. The Framework's proposals involving the conservation of and respect for heritage elements are in line with heritage policies within the Local Plan which were subject to Sustainability Appraisal. These include EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment, EN2: Areas of Archaeological Significance, EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas and EN6: New Development in a Historic Context.

Development of the Hexagon Quarter

The appraisal of CR12e: Hosier Street takes into consideration the entire text of the policy, which states that a replacement for the Hexagon will only be developed if a replacement facility is provided and that the approach to the theatre will be improved. This is in line with the Framework's proposals and therefore is assessed within the Sustainability Appraisal for the Local Plan.

Section 106 Requirements and CIL Liability

Policy CC9 of the Local Plan sets out the overall approach to seeking contributions and this policy was subject to appraisal with the rest of the Local Plan.

Provision of public open space, as well as private outdoor space

The proposals within the Framework seek a balance between private outdoor space for residents and public open space in line with Local Plan policies. These requirements are assessed through the sustainability appraisals of EN7: Local Green Space and Public Open Space, EN9: Provision of Open Space and H10: Private and Communal Space.

Overall timetable for phasing of development

The overall timetable of development is broadly in line with the implementation framework of the Local Plan. Since it does not represent a strategy or policy per se, it did not require a Sustainability Appraisal at that point and does not require it now.

Footbridge/Decking over IDR

Helping to facilitate improved crossings of the IDR is a key priority outlined in Policy CR12: West Side Major Opportunity Area. Therefore, the sustainability appraisal for this Local Plan policy has taken this into account.

CONCLUSION

The Minster Quarter Area Development Framework is a development of the themes and proposals which have existed within the Local Development Framework for some time. Although the text above refers to the new Local Plan, a Sustainability Appraisal for the

Reading Central Area Action Plan (RCAAP) was also performed in 2008. The relevant policies from the RCAAP have been carried into the new Local Plan largely unchanged. The requirement for Sustainability Appraisal of the proposals within the Minster Quarter Area Development Framework has therefore been met by the Sustainability Appraisal of the Local Plan.