

# SUFFOLK COASTAL DISTRICT COUNCIL



**Suffolk Coastal**

*...where quality of life counts*

## **Proposed Sustainability Appraisal criteria for site assessment in the Site Specific Allocations document**

February 2006



The purpose of this document is to provide an indication to land owners and agents, as well as the general public, relating to how the Council intends to carry out Sustainability Appraisal of proposed and submitted site allocations in the Local Development Framework.

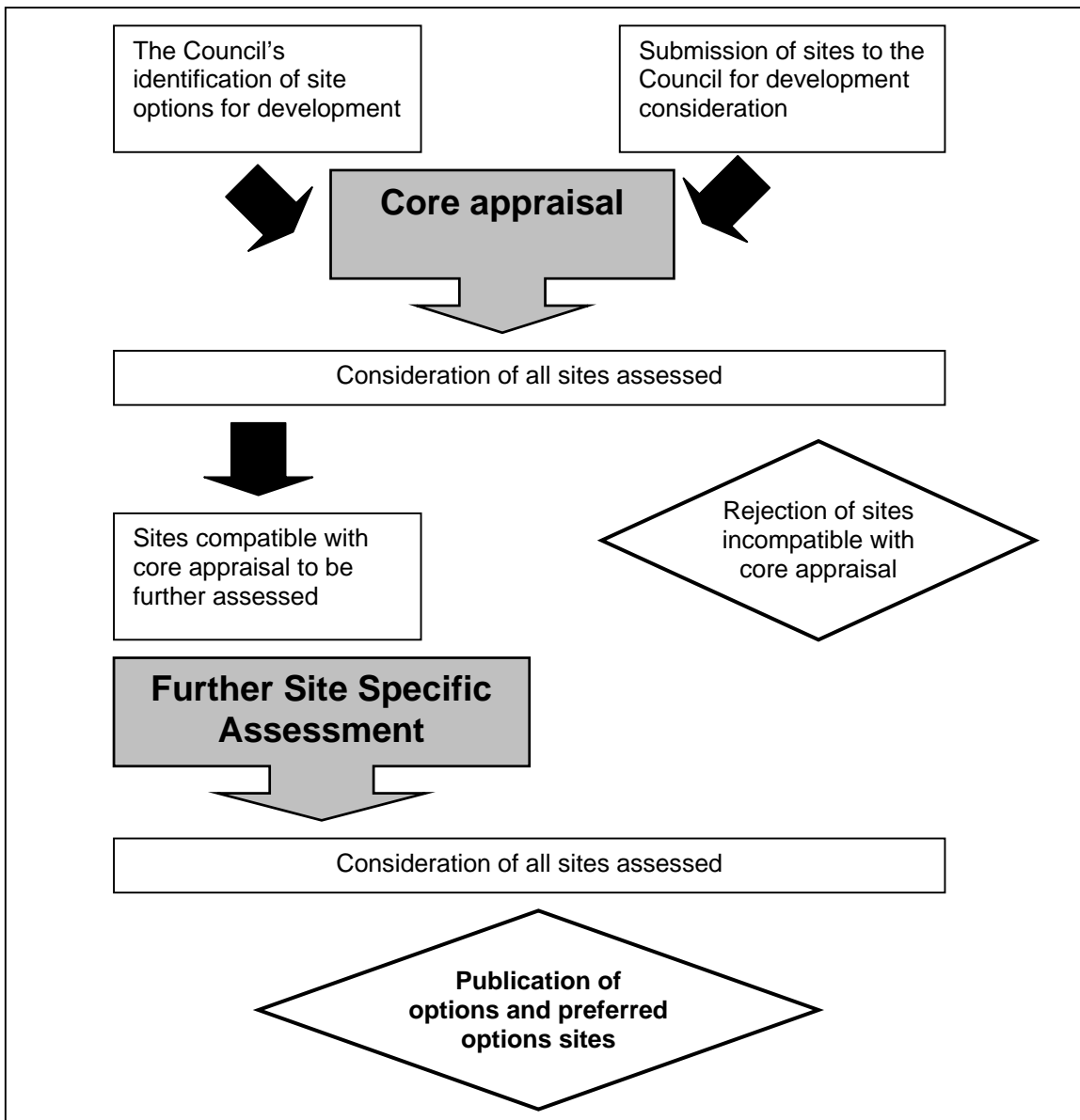
It is a statutory requirement for local authorities to demonstrate how the process of Sustainability Appraisal (including Strategic Environmental Appraisal), has been used to assess the social, economic and environmental characteristics and impacts of site specific allocation proposals and options. The Council will use this proposed criteria to evaluate and identify the opportunities and constraints expected from identified sites.

## Draft methodology for the Sustainability Appraisal assessment of sites

A key aim of the Suffolk Coastal Local Development Framework is to make sure that development takes place in the most appropriate locations within the context of the district. The Council proposes to take this forward in two ways:

- A Core Appraisal which will set out the suitability of towns and villages across the whole district to accommodate sustainable growth. Individual sites will be assessed for their compatibility with the spatial strategy.
- A further site specific assessment which will carry out the sustainability appraisal of those individual sites demonstrated to be compatible or potentially compatible with the spatial strategy. It will also assess the cumulative impacts upon related sites.

These appraisals are in addition to the proposed appraisal of policies and strategies



The Objective Site Assessment criteria used to appraise sites have been developed from the 22 Objectives contained in the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report. This is to ensure

that the most suitable sites are brought forward which contribute towards sustainable development. The relationship between the Sustainability Appraisal Objectives and the site Objective Assessment Criteria is set out in Table 1. It can be seen that the Objective Assessment criteria covers the broad range of sustainability objectives.

**Table 1**

	Sustainability Appraisal Objectives																					
	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
01				*	*	*	*	*		*	*		*			*	*	*		*		
02	*				*	*	*	*					*	*					*	*	*	*
03					*		*	*					*	*				*	*			
04					*		*	*	*				*	*		*	*	*	*		*	*
05	*		*	*	*			*				*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*
06	*	*	*	*	*	*		*	*				*	*		*	*	*	*		*	*
07		*		*	*	*	*	*					*	*					*	*	*	*
08			*				*	*		*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*		*		
09	*			*	*			*	*	*	*				*	*	*	*	*	*		
10	*							*	*	*	*							*	*	*		*
11								*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*		*
12	*		*	*			*	*						*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
13							*	*								*	*	*	*	*	*	*
14									*	*	*					*		*	*			*
15	*		*	*	*	*	*	*	*				*	*	*				*		*	*
16	*		*	*	*			*								*		*	*	*	*	
17	*				*	*	*	*					*	*	*						*	
18	*			*			*	*	*		*			*	*				*			*
19	*								*	*	*								*			
20	*						*	*	*		*				*							
21	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

There are a total of 21 Objective Assessment Criteria and Table 2 sets out in greater detail what specific issues for each criteria will be used to inform the impact decision of the site. All site appraisals will be based upon information and data available at the time of assessment. They may well be subject to change as a result from consultation with relevant bodies or information updates becoming available at a later date.

Table2

Objective Assessment Criteria	Issues for consideration	Policy support
<b>Core Appraisal</b>		
1. Site type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the site previously developed (brownfield) or greenfield?</li> <li>• Is there any planning decision history on the site which may impact development potential?</li> </ul> <p><i>A most favourable site will be identified as entirely previously development land.</i></p> <p><i>A favourable site will be where the site is predominantly (at least 75%) previously development land.</i></p> <p><i>A neutral site is where there is approximately a 50/50 split between previously development and greenfield land.</i></p> <p><i>A unfavourable site will be where the site is predominantly (at least 75%) greenfield but is located within existing physical limits boundaries. A vacant site not previously developed within existing physical limits boundaries will also score poorly.</i></p> <p><i>A very unfavourable site will be a greenfield site located outside of existing physical limits boundaries.</i></p>	<p>Government policy states that previously development sites are more sustainable and should be prioritised for development where possible. PPS 9 goes on to say 'the re-use of previously development land for new development makes a major contribution to sustainable development by reducing the amount of countryside and undeveloped land that needs to be used'.</p> <p>The Council may already have a previous planning application decision on the site which affects the use of the land.</p>
2. Relationship with settlement hierarchy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the site well related to a suitable town/village identified in the settlement hierarchy?</li> </ul> <p><i>A site will impact very favourably if it is within a major urban area, market town, key service centre or local service centres. It will also score very highly if it is well related to a major urban area or market town.</i></p>	<p>Government guidance states that development should occur in or near to identified appropriate settlements.</p> <p>The Regional Spatial Strategy states that development should be focused in major urban areas, market towns and thereafter key service centres. More locally, the</p>

	<p><i>A site will impact favourably if it is well related to a key service centre, local service centre or within an other village.</i></p> <p><i>A site will impact poorly if it is badly related to any settlement.</i></p> <p><i>A site will impact very poorly if it is unrelated to any settlement or in the countryside.</i></p>	<p>settlement hierarchy has identified local service centres and other villages as capable of accommodating appropriate/exceptional growth.</p>
<p>3. Scale of development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the scale of the development site appropriate to the type of town/village identified in the settlement hierarchy*?</li> </ul> <p><i>Larger scale development is considered most appropriate in major urban areas and market towns, subject to other constraints.</i></p> <p><i>In identified key service centres, development over the size of 1ha is considered inappropriate to the settlement.</i></p> <p><i>In identified local service centres, development over the size of 0.25ha is considered inappropriate to the settlement.</i></p> <p>* The settlement hierarchy is progressing through the production of the Core Strategy. Currently this document has been agreed internally but has not been subject to public consultation. A copy of the draft settlement hierarchy is attached.</p>	<p>The Regional Spatial Strategy, states that local authorities should consider the appropriateness of development scale to a settlement.</p> <p>Urban areas and market towns are considered to be able to accommodate growth.</p> <p>Key Service Centres can accommodate minor growth.</p> <p>Local Service Centres are where small group developments may be allowed to address a specific social, economic or community objective(s).</p> <p>Other villages and countryside are identified areas where development will normally not be encouraged unless there is a demonstrated rural exception.</p>
<p>4. Retain settlement character and identity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will development significantly change the character of the settlement and surrounding area?</li> <li>• Does development threaten to engulf smaller settlements into larger towns/villages?</li> <li>• Will it set a precedent for</li> </ul>	<p>The Regional Spatial Strategy states that in all other rural settlements, [outside of market towns and key service centres] local authorities should consider the potential to accommodate new development, sympathetic</p>

	development in the local area?	to local character and of an appropriate scale and nature, to accommodate local employment and housing needs.
5. Access to key services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is development located at a settlement identified with sufficient key services?</li> <li>• Is development well related at the settlement to these facilities?</li> <li>• Are there any significant barriers which affect access to facilities?</li> <li>• Will development benefit the existing key local services?</li> </ul> <p>Key services include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>i) Local employment opportunities,</i></li> <li><i>ii) public transport,</i></li> <li><i>iii) primary school,</i></li> <li><i>iv) general shop,</i></li> <li><i>v) post office,</i></li> <li><i>vi) meeting place,</i></li> <li><i>vii) doctors,</i></li> <li><i>viii) pub.</i></li> </ul>	<p>The Regional Spatial Strategy has advocated the methodology for assessing settlements according to their services and functions. Urban areas and market towns will by their nature have a good range of services and can accommodate growth.</p> <p>Key Service Centres are large villages, locally identified with a good level of services.</p> <p>Local service centres are locally identified settlements with limited services.</p>
6. Access and transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there good access to a) the site directly and b) the main district road network?</li> <li>• Is the site well related to public transport links? (bus, train)</li> <li>• Is there potential for improving other sustainable transport links? (walking, cycling etc)</li> </ul>	The Regional Spatial Strategy states that development will need to contribute to reducing the need to travel as well as providing opportunities to increase the usage of non road-based transport links.
7. Relationship with local economic activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will the development involve the loss of an existing employment site?</li> <li>• Does the development promote or maintain employment provision?</li> <li>• Is the site well related [within 10km] of an existing or proposed strategic/local</li> </ul>	The Regional Spatial Strategy highlights that development in rural areas will need to consider the employment and economic diversification issues in order to sustain local viability.

	<p>employment provision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will the development impact upon the viability of agricultural activity.</li> </ul>	
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<b>Site specific assessment</b>		
8. Visual amenity and landscape quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the site located within a designated landscape value? (AONB, SLA, Heritage Coast).</li> <li>• Will the development detract from the visual amenity of the local area?</li> <li>• Will the development impact upon important landscape features? (TPOs, Ancient woodland, hedgerows).</li> </ul>	<p>The Regional Spatial Strategy instructs planning authorities to conserve and enhance landscape character, particularly in relation to the Suffolk Coasts &amp; Heaths AONB and Suffolk Heritage Coast.</p>
9. Hydrology, flooding and erosion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the site impact upon the capacity of water supply systems?</li> <li>• Does the site conform with the principles of the 'sequential test'?</li> <li>• Is the site located in an identified flood risk zone?</li> <li>• Is the site likely to suffer from fluvial erosion processes? (rivers, estuaries, coasts)</li> </ul>	<p>The Regional Spatial Strategy states that development should not adversely impact on water supply thresholds. In addition, areas prone to flooding should be protected from development unless there is a distinct lack of alternative sites. Development should also be compatible with the shoreline management plan and avoid increasing the need for expensive erosion defences.</p> <p>PPS25 sets out that when considering development site proposals regard should be had to the sequential test.</p>
10. Contaminated land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is development located on an identified contaminated land site or within 500m of a potentially contaminated site?</li> </ul>	<p>Part IIA, of EPA 1990 and Planning Policy Statement 23 requires that contaminated land be suitably assessed.</p>
11. Biodiversity & Geodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the development within 500m of identified internationally, nationally or locally designated sites and likely to have a direct or indirect impact?</li> <li>• Is the site located within</li> </ul>	<p>The Regional Spatial Strategy provides that biodiversity and earth heritage and natural resources will be protected, enriched and restored. Internationally</p>

	<p>500m of an identified core biodiversity area?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will the development affect statutory protected species?</li> <li>• Will the development impact upon identified nationally and locally important BAP habitats and species?</li> <li>• Is the site likely to impact upon a designated Natura 2000 site to a significant extent, and therefore require an appropriate assessment?</li> </ul> <p><i>Internationally and nationally designated sites include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) RAMSAR,</li> <li>ii) SAC,</li> <li>iii) SPA,</li> <li>iv) SSSI</li> </ul> <p><i>Local designated sites include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) CWS</li> <li>ii) LNRs</li> <li>iii) RIGS</li> </ul>	<p>and nationally designated sites will be given the strongest protection level.</p> <p>PPS9 outlines the Government's objectives for planning in terms of the promotion of sustainable development and the conservation, enhancement and restoration of wildlife and geology. It also states that in the case of brownfield land where there is significant biodiversity or geological interest, local authorities and developers should aim to retain this interest or accommodate it into any development on the site.</p> <p>Statutory Protected Species are listed under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, The Protection of Badgers Act 1992, The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &amp;c.) Regulations 1994.</p> <p>The Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan has identified locally important species and habitats requiring protection. Generally accepted practice implies at least a 1km radius to consider the effects upon important species or habitats.</p> <p>Regulation 48(1) of the EU Habitats Regulations 1994 requires that an Appropriate Assessment must be carried out for a site which either alone or in combination would likely have a significant effect upon a designated European site.</p>
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12. Recreation value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will the development impact upon identified openspace, playspace or allotment provisions?</li> <li>• Does the site impact upon a public right of way or bridleway?</li> </ul>	The Regional Spatial Strategy states that local authorities must seek to protect the most valuable existing recreational resources from inappropriate development.
13. Built form and heritage features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will the development impact upon identified areas of heritage value? (conservation area, ancient monuments, listed buildings, archaeological areas).</li> </ul>	The Regional Spatial Strategy requires planning authorities to identify, protect, conserve and where appropriate, enhance the historic environment of the region.
14. Agricultural land quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will development impact upon soil quality of agricultural land?</li> </ul>	Government policy states that high quality agricultural land should be protected where possible from irreversible damage.
15. Proximity and impact to sources of air pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the development within close proximity (&lt;1km) to an existing source of air pollution?</li> <li>• Will the development exacerbate air quality pollution issues?</li> </ul>	The Regional Spatial Strategy sets out that development should not exacerbate air quality in identified or potential AQMAs. Development should also seek to minimise and mitigate air quality pollution issues.
16. Proximity to sources of noise/light pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the development located in an area where there is excessive local noise/light exposure?</li> </ul>	<p>Planning Policy Statement 23 states that consideration should be given towards the need to limit and, where possible, reduce the adverse impact of light pollution.</p> <p>Planning Policy Guidance 24 states that noise-sensitive developments (housing, hospitals and schools) should be located away from existing sources of significant noise and that potentially noisy developments be located in areas which noise would not be so important or can be minimised.</p>
17. Topography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the height and shape of the land suitable to develop upon?</li> </ul>	Although there is no specific planning policy on this issue, it is necessary to consider the physical characteristics of the site

		itself. A site with sporadic undulations in the land would be more difficult and costly to develop.
18. Potential for energy efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the site sheltered from wind exposure?</li> <li>• Is the site orientated to south facing? (potential for solar gain)</li> </ul>	The Regional Spatial Strategy states that developers should be required to maximise energy efficiencies to be gained from sustainable design and construction.
19. Other constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the site impact upon more general constraints:</li> </ul> <p><i>General constraints include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>i) Minerals consultation areas</i></li> <li><i>ii) Identified future waste sites</i></li> <li><i>iii) Groundwater vulnerability zones</i></li> <li><i>iv) Presence of major utilities across the site</i></li> <li><i>v) Radon gas safeguarding zones</i></li> <li><i>vi) Sizewell nuclear plant safeguarding zones</i></li> </ul>	<p>The Suffolk Minerals Local Plan 1999, requires authorities to consult the County Council on sites over 1ha in size which are located upon identified minerals consultation areas for safeguarding.</p> <p>The Waste Local Plan for Suffolk 2006 has identified a number of potential future waste sites across the district and development must be considered against these.</p> <p>The cost of remediating any groundwater pollution incidents is very expensive. Groundwater pollution control must therefore be preventative. The Water Resources Act 1991, makes it an offence to pollute groundwater sources.</p> <p>The associated costs involved with the relocation of major utilities lines [gas, oil, electricity, fiber-optics, telephone etc] can impact upon the viability of a site for development.</p> <p>Radon gas – Under Planning Policy Statement 23, as radon emissions in new development poses a risk to human health, it should be treated as a material consideration.</p>

		<p>However, there are no circumstances where appropriate measures cannot be taken to protect/remedy – it should be highlighted as a constraint.</p> <p>Nuclear safeguarding – there is a condition of Sizewell power station, Leiston which imposes a ceiling figure on the number of dwellings which can be built within a defined area.</p>
20. Availability of utilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the site have sufficient local infrastructure capacity for water supply and drainage systems?</li> </ul>	<p>Although there are no specific policies relating to this, it is a point which justifies discussion. The viability and timing of developing a site can be critically affected by the availability of existing infrastructure provisions. Consultation with relevant service providers will need to be undertaken.</p>
21. Possible cumulative impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the site significantly add to the effect of existing and proposed sites?</li> </ul>	<p>The Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment requirements set out that any cumulative impacts expected must be recorded.</p>

<b>Site:</b>		<b>Settlement:</b>		<b>Area (ha):</b>	
		<b>Grid Ref:</b>		<b>Postcode:</b>	
<b>Site Ref:</b>		<b>Proposal Source:</b>			
<b>Density (/ha):</b>		<b>Ownership:</b>			
<b>Site history:</b>					
<b>Current use:</b>		<b>Proposed use:</b>			

<b>Core Appraisal</b>	<b>Objective Assessment Criteria</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Comments</b>
	1. Site type		
	2. Settlement hierarchy		
	3. Scale of development		
	4. Retain settlement character and identity		
	5. Access to key services		
	6. Access and transport		
	7. Relationship with local economic activity		
	<b>COMPLIANCE WITH SPATIAL STRATEGY</b>		

<b>Further Site Specific Assessment</b>	<b>Objective Assessment Criteria</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Comments</b>
	8. Visual amenity and landscape quality		
	9. Hydrology, flooding and erosion		
	10. Contaminated land		
	11. Biodiversity		
	12. Recreation value		
	13. Built form and heritage features		
	14. Agricultural land quality		

<b>15. Proximity and impact to sources of air pollution</b>		
<b>16. Proximity to sources of noise/light pollution</b>		
<b>17. Topography</b>		
<b>18. Potential for energy efficiency</b>		
<b>19. Other constraints</b>		
<b>20. Availability of utilities</b>		
<b>21. Possible cumulative impact</b>		

**Impact Key**

++ major positive  
0 no impact/neutral  
- minor negative

+ minor positive  
? uncertain  
-- major negative

<b>Significant Positives:</b>	
<b>Significant Negatives:</b>	
<b>Mitigation considerations:</b>	
<b>OVERALL ASSESSMENT:</b>	

Ref: P:\p\Site Specific Allocations\ Site Assessment Template.doc