

Core Strategy and Town Centre Area Action Plan Preferred Options



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Are they Sustainable?

What is Sustainability Appraisal? The Council uses a process called **Sustainability Appraisal (SA)** to test the documents, which it is preparing for the Guildford Development Framework (GDF), to ensure that they do not conflict with the aims of sustainable development.

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present generation, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This means:

- living within environmental limits, protection and enhancement of the physical and natural environment;
- using resources and energy as efficiently as possible;
- ensuring a strong, healthy and just society that promotes social inclusion, sustainable communities and personal well being;
- promoting good governance;
- using sound science responsibly; and
- achieving a sustainable, innovative and productive economy that delivers high levels of employment.

The Council has recently updated its **Sustainability Appraisal Framework**, which sets out the 19 SA objectives which are being used to appraise GDF documents.

What is a Sustainability Appraisal Report?

The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Report considers the likely significant sustainability effects of planning documents, in this case the Core Strategy Preferred Options and Town Centre Area Action Plan Preferred Options. A summary of the SA's main findings are set out below, under the SA objective headings (some objectives are not mentioned as no significant effects are predicted concerning those issues).

The appraisal findings have helped the Council to understand which of the options are the most sustainable. There will also be other considerations in deciding which options to take forward to the next stage – including your comments received during these consultations – so each Report also highlights potential mitigation measures and monitoring, so that any of the options could be delivered in a more sustainable way and their performance can later be measured.

What effects do the SA Reports highlight?

Amongst the main conclusions for each preferred option document are:

Core Strategy (Preferred Options)

To provide sufficient housing to enable people to live in a home suitable to their needs and which they can afford— The Housing preferred option maintains the rate of new house building in the Borough but requires an increased minimum of 35% of new dwellings in larger schemes to be affordable. This is likely to be of significant benefit in terms of this objective.



On the other hand the Housing preferred option also introduces a new requirement for a proportion of new development on larger sites to be easily adaptable for the elderly. This, together with the requirement for increased energy efficiency in new housing (Environment preferred option), is likely to increase the overall costs of new development.

To facilitate the improved health and well-being of the population— Some 20% of new build is to be adaptable for the elderly ("Lifetime Homes"), which should contribute to the well-being of older people with disabilities.

To reduce the risk of flooding— The preferred approach is to avoid development within the flood plain, unless there are no other viable alternatives and appropriate flood mitigation is provided. Any future development would need to meet the stringent requirements of the Environment Agency.



To make the best use of previously developed land and existing buildings— There is a stronger focus within the Location and Pace of Development preferred option on building new development on previously developed land. The Core Strategy is therefore likely to have increasingly significant beneficial effects on this objective over time.

To ensure air quality continues to improve and noise/light pollution is reduced— The Housing preferred option proposes that most of the new dwellings will be concentrated in urban areas and in Guildford Town Centre in particular. Air quality in the town is currently good but there is a risk that additional traffic generated by the new development could cause a marginal deterioration in air quality, however, this is not likely to be a significant effect.

To conserve and enhance biodiversity within the plan area— Although the Housing preferred option anticipates an increase in the number of houses in Guildford Borough, which could result in important adverse impacts on biodiversity, the Environment preferred option proposes measures to offset these effects and preserve the Borough's sites of nature conservation and biodiversity importance.

To reduce land contamination and safeguard soil quality and quantity— The Location and Pace of Development preferred option focuses new development on previously developed land, some of which may be contaminated. If this is the case, it could indirectly assist in clear up of contaminated land and have a significantly beneficial effect in terms of this objective. The option will also ensure that agricultural land is protected from development.

To address the causes of climate change and ensure that the Borough is prepared for its impacts— The Environment preferred option includes a substantial new commitment to renewable energy and energy efficiency in new development. This will have a beneficial effect in reducing the Borough's contribution to the causes of climate change. It is possible that the indicative policy concerning flooding may allow - suitably mitigated - development in areas prone to flooding, in comparison to the existing Local Plan position. It is recognised that there is a need to be sensitive to the uncertainties of climate change and it may be necessary to adapt to these in the longer term.

To reduce the global, social and environmental impact of consumption of resources— The Core Strategy preferred options are unlikely to significantly influence this objective, although the long-term effect on reducing energy consumption proposed by the Environment preferred option is likely to be important in the context of Guildford Borough.

To maintain and improve the water quality of the region's rivers and groundwater, and to achieve sustainable water resource management— New development envisaged by the Housing preferred option is likely to increase the demand for water in an already stressed water environment, resulting in a significantly adverse impact, cumulatively with other local authorities (a regional issue, recognised through the draft South East Plan).



To increase energy efficiency and the proportion of energy generated from renewable sources— The Environment Preferred Option includes a substantial new commitment to renewable energy and energy efficiency in new development. This is likely to have a beneficial effect in reducing the Borough's overall use of energy.

Town Centre Area Action Plan (Preferred Options)

To provide sufficient housing to enable people to live in a home suitable to their needs and which they can afford— Many of the proposed development sites include housing provision and this will assist in meeting the overall housing need of the town and the Borough. The Core Strategy preferred options will ensure that about 35% of new houses in larger schemes will be affordable housing.



To reduce the risk of flooding— A number of the proposed redevelopment sites are located in the River Wey flood zone, placing them at heightened risk of flooding. While this is inevitable, given that Guildford is an historic town, set on the banks of the Wey, it is not ideal and represents a significant adverse impact in terms of this objective. (Suitable mitigation measures will be secured before developments are permitted).

To create and sustain vibrant communities— The overall aim of the Town Centre Area Action Plan is to create a thriving, safe and vibrant town centre. The long-term cumulative effect of the preferred options should be to help achieve this objective.

To make the best use of previously developed land and existing buildings— All of the proposed development sites are on previously developed land and will therefore contribute significantly to the achievement of this objective.

To conserve and enhance biodiversity within the plan area— While there are relatively few biodiversity and nature conservation assets within the town centre itself, it is still possible that the growth in population within the town could contribute to adverse effects on the nearby Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA). Through the emerging Core Strategy, new housing development will be expected to provide open space to relieve the pressure on the Heaths from recreational use. (The Council is working on a plan to avoid harm to the SPA, including improving accessibility to the existing countryside outside of the Town Centre).

To protect, enhance, and make accessible the natural, archaeological and historic environments and cultural assets of Guildford— The Tourism preferred option may contribute to enhancement of the historic townscape. Certain of the proposed development sites may have adverse effects on strategic views. These effects could be avoided through sympathetic design.



To reduce land contamination and safeguard soil quality and quantity— All of the proposed development sites are on previously developed land. It is possible that, in some cases, the prior use may have resulted in contamination to the soils underlying the site. This would normally be remediated as part of any redevelopment, so there is potential that there could be indirect beneficial effects on this objective from such remediation.

To address the causes of climate change and ensure that the Borough is prepared for its impacts— The Environment preferred option and indicative Policy TCG1 call for an investigation of the feasibility of combined heat and power (CHP) in larger new developments. This would result in a marginally lower demand for energy, implying a small reduction in carbon dioxide emissions from energy generation.

To maintain and improve the water quality of the region's rivers and groundwater, and to achieve sustainable water resources management— The Town Centre Area Action Plan preferred options may increase the demand for water but are not thought likely to have significant effects on this objective.

To increase energy efficiency and the proportion of energy generated from renewable sources— It is proposed in the Environment preferred option and indicative Policy TCG1 that the feasibility of combined heat and power (CHP) in larger new developments must be investigated before planning permission can be given. If such schemes are implemented they could be significantly beneficial in reducing the demand for energy from the Town Centre.

To maintain low rates of unemployment and high levels of economic activity, by improving skills, training and education— There are likely to be employment opportunities both during construction work and following completion of the redevelopment in the Town Centre. It is perhaps unlikely that many jobs will be generated locally through construction.



To provide for appropriate commercial development opportunities to meet the needs of the economy— The Shopping preferred option states that the town centre will be the focus for major retail developments. A number of the proposed development sites include provision for commercial and retail land uses. This suggests that the Town Centre Area Action Plan Preferred Options are likely to have significantly beneficial effects on this objective, although many sites are carried over from the Local Plan.

How have these recommendations influenced the SPD's? Drawing on these findings the Sustainability Appraisals made a series of recommendations about how the two documents could be made better. The Council has amended both draft documents accordingly. Some of the measures identified may be considered for inclusion in the future, when comments received during this consultation are analysed and the Core Strategy and Town Centre Area Action Plan documents are improved further before submission to the Secretary of State early next year.

Ultimately, effectiveness of both planning documents from the point of view of sustainable development will rely upon an effective partnership between the Council, prospective developers and the wider community.

How can I find out more and comment?

We need your comments. The two full sustainability appraisal reports are available on the Council's website at www.guildford.gov.uk choose Planning and Building Control, then Consultations. You can also view paper copies from the **planning helpdesk** at the Council's Millmead Offices or Guildford, Ash and East Horsley libraries.

Both preferred options questionnaires include specific questions about the sustainability appraisal, through which you can give us your comments.

Email us at planningpolicy@guildford.gov.uk or Phone **01483 44464** if you would like more information

The consultation period starts on **19 June 2006**

The deadline for all your comments to be in is **5pm on 31 July 2006**

Thank you for taking the time to read this leaflet.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Copies of this document can be made available in different formats including different languages, Braille, large print and audio.