



Consultation on the Guildford Town Centre Area Action Plan Issues and Options - Sustainability Appraisal Progress Report

What is Sustainability Appraisal? The Government requires that **Sustainability Appraisal** be used to test the documents which the Council prepares for its Local Development Framework, 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 effective protection of the environment and prudent use of natural resources, social progress which recognises the needs of everyone and maintaining high and stable levels of economic growth.

The Council has prepared a **Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Framework** and has already, and will continue to, update this to ensure it is as relevant and effective as possible.

What is the Sustainability Appraisal Progress Report? The updated SA Framework has been used to test the draft Issues and Options for the Town Centre Area Action Plan (TCAAP) - please see the separate consultation leaflet. The process and findings of this work are set out in a **Sustainability Appraisal Progress Report**, which identifies the key likely impacts of each draft Option on social, environmental and economic interests.

These findings are helping 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 – for example the public's comments received during this consultation – so the Report also highlights potential mitigation measures so any of the options could be delivered in a more sustainable way.

What does the Report recommend? The main conclusions can be summarised as follows:

Town Centre Boundary Options - Option 4 covers the smallest area, focusing on the main area of focus for business activity, hence it offers less scope for redevelopment and is the least likely of the four boundary options to be able to deliver the sustainability benefits associated with mixed use. Options 2 and 3 offer the greatest potential, particularly in delivering biodiversity benefits and mixed-use development and give greater scope to avoid development on the edge of the urban areas or in the open countryside. Redevelopment at higher densities in the historic core of the town will require detailed policy criteria to avoid harm to historic and archaeological interests.



Housing – Provision of affordable homes in the Town Centre is important to sustainability, delivering improved access to jobs and facilities and, indirectly, benefits to welfare and health. Option 1 is therefore the most sustainable. If Option 1 were taken forward, clear criteria would be needed to ensure construction was sustainable and would not exacerbate traffic congestion, that design was sensitive to the historic environment, and that opportunities to provide green space were taken.



Option 2 could achieve sustainability benefits through mixed-use redevelopment. Option 5 would assist reduction of traffic congestion and, consequently, improved air quality. Combining Options 4 and 6 could be effective in delivering more affordable homes to the Town Centre in the short term.

Town Centre Facilities – The report concludes that it is difficult to predict the sustainability impacts of Options 1 or 2, although improvement in the quality and quantity of facilities are likely to have many benefits.

Redevelopment and mixed use would assist Town Centre safety, by incorporating safer design and use of spaces for longer periods of the day, particularly important if Option 9 were to be taken forward.



Environment – Increased protection of the environment (Option 1) provides clear, direct and immediate benefits to most of the sustainability criteria, but may limit the ability to deliver more affordable housing and commercial/retail floor space. For a balanced and mutually beneficial approach, greater protection of the environment achieved through Option 4 is recommended.



Offices - Guildford is a prosperous town centre with very low unemployment and adequate office provision. As the need for affordable housing is pressing, Option 3 is most likely to deliver sustainability benefits where these are most needed and in the short term.



Movement - Increasing, enhancing and encouraging walking or cycling to and from Guildford Town Centre (Options 2 and 3) would benefit all sustainability criteria. If focussed in the areas where access to a car or public transport is poor, welfare benefits might be achieved. Careful co-ordination and control could also see habitat links improved for the natural environment. Options 1 and 4 would free up Town Centre space for other uses, benefiting land use efficiency and facilitating a balanced economy. Detailed policy should be developed to ensure consideration of the location of Park and Ride facilities (Option 1) and the ability to secure free flowing bus routes.

Shopping - More shops (Option 1) would mean additional pressure on the natural and historic environment. Providing more retail space through Options 4, 5 and 7 may, however, meet other sustainability objectives by making efficient use of land, strengthening the local economy and vibrancy of the Town Centre. Option 3 could improve the balance of Town Centre uses and the delivery of affordable housing in the most accessible part of the Borough.



Tourism – There is a concern that traffic movements may increase; Movement Options 1 and 5 would provide considerable mitigation (Park and Ride and coach parking facilities). Increasing attractions and facilities (Option 3) may put pressure on the historic and natural environment, however, as the attraction of Guildford Town Centre is closely linked to its environment, detailed policy criteria would be needed to specify the design and location requirements of new development and conversions.

How have these recommendations influenced the process? These findings were taken into account when finalising the Issues and Options set out in the Town Centre Area Action Plan consultation leaflet. Three amendments were made, to the Shopping Option 3 and its supporting text and to Town Centre Facilities Option 2. The remaining recommendations will be addressed as Preferred Options are developed for the Town Centre Area Action Plan, on which we will consult the public in 2006.

How can I find out more?

- Check out www.guildford.gov.uk to view the SA Progress Report in full
- Email us if you would like an electronic copy sent to you, or
- Visit **Planning Helpdesk** at the Council's offices, Millmead, Guildford



Have your say

If you would like to **comment on the methodology or findings of this Progress Report**, or **ask a question**, please contact us:

Email: planningpolicy@guildford.gov.uk

Write: Planning Policy, Environmental Policy and Design Services,
Guildford Borough Council, Millmead House, Millmead, Guildford, Surrey GU2 4BB

Or Phone: (01483) 444 464 Tracey Haskins, Principal Planner

Please ensure your comments reach us by 30th June 2005. Thank you.