

FULL COUNCIL

16TH JULY 2014

REPORT OF HEAD OF REGULATORY SERVICES

MELTON LOCAL PLAN – SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL SCOPING REPORT

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the recommendation referred from the Melton Local Plan Working Group for the consultation of the Melton Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report to be commenced.
- 1.2 This report informs Full Council of how the Sustainability Appraisal and Equalities Impact Assessment will be integrated into the preparation of the new Melton Local Plan.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **That Full Council approve the Draft Melton Local Plan Sustainability Scoping Report (Appendix 3) for a five week consultation with statutory consultees and any other interested party, with authority delegated to the Head of Regulatory Services to approve any minor amendments following the responses received.**

3 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 A Sustainability Appraisal is a systematic process that must be carried out during the preparation of the new Melton Local Plan under Section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Its role is to promote sustainable development by assessing the extent to which the various options emerging from the plan will help to achieve relevant environmental, economic and social objectives.
- 3.2 This process is an opportunity to consider ways by which the plan can contribute to improvements in environmental, social and economic conditions, as well as a means of identifying and mitigating any potential adverse effects that the plan might otherwise have. By doing so, it will ensure that the options coming forward from the plan process can be adequately compared. It can be used to test the evidence underpinning the plan and help to demonstrate how the tests of soundness have been met. Sustainability Appraisal should be applied as an iterative process informing the development of the Local Plan. Appendix B to this report sets out how the SA will be integrated into the preparation of the new Melton Local Plan.

- 3.3 Sustainability Appraisals incorporate the requirements of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, which implement the European Directive 2001/42/EC on the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment. Sustainability ensures that the potential environmental effects are given full consideration alongside social and economic issues.
- 3.4 An Equalities Impact Assessment would also be carried out on the Local Plan in addition to SA reports. This is not part of the SA process but nevertheless covers sustainability issues and it has therefore been integrated into the Sustainability Appraisal process. Both assessment types have aspects in common with the other. In the interest of efficiency and the desire to avoid duplication, the two assessments have been integrated under the umbrella of Sustainability Appraisal and are being undertaken simultaneously over the preparation of the plan period. This approach has been agreed by the Borough Councils Equality and Diversity consultant, and the integrated assessment will be checked at agreed intervals in the preparation of the new Melton Local Plan, by the Borough Councils check and challenge group.
- 3.5 The Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) will assess and record the likely impact of policies on different groups of people, distinguished by their gender, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief or disability. The consequences of policies and projects on particular groups are analysed and anticipated so that, as far as possible, any negative impacts can be abolished or reduced and opportunities for improving equality can be maximised.
- 3.6 The EqIA is a requirement under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the Equality Standard for Local Government, which places general and specific duties on public authorities to promote race equality and prevent unlawful discrimination.
- 3.7 A non-technical summary has been provided, within Appendix A of this report setting out the sustainability appraisal process in relation to the new Melton Local Plan.

Scoping

- 3.8 The initial stage of the SA (Stage A, Appendix 2) compiles relevant plans, policies and programmes from an international; national, regional, county and local level into a baseline.
- 3.9 Baseline information has also been collated on the existing environmental, economic and social characteristics of the Borough likely to be affected by the new Melton Local Plan and their likely evolution without implementation of the plan. These include data such as population profile and distribution, existing travel patterns, environmental factors (such as properties vulnerable to flooding, landscape character, heritage assets etc) and economic factors such as employment levels and income profiles. It is important at this stage to include relevant data and monitoring indicators to reflect the equalities impact

assessment, and these have been prepared in consultation with the Borough Council's Equality and Diversity Consultant.

- 3.10 The key messages from the analysis of the baseline information and a review of the plans policies and programmes has been used to formulate the SA objectives. SA objectives are slightly different to the objectives of the plan itself, in order to reflect the current social, economic and environmental characteristics of the Borough and to monitor any significant effects of the implementation of the new Melton Local Plan. In order to assess the effectiveness of the SA objectives over time a series of indicators have been developed, and will be included as part of the Borough's Annual Monitoring Report. A full list of these is included in Appendix 3 (see table 23, page 88).
- 3.11 The SA objectives have been developed into an SA Framework for use in assessing the effects of different policy options. This is achieved by developing a series of questions for each of the objectives. This is in accordance with the ODPM (now CLG) Practical Guide to the SEA Directive.
- 3.12 In applying the SA Framework the assessment process will seek to predict significant environmental effects of the draft Melton Local Plan. This is done by identifying likely changes to the baseline conditions as a result of implementing the proposed plan (or reasonable alternatives). These changes will be described (where possible) in terms of their geographic scale, the timescale over which they occur whether the effects would be temporary or permanent , positive or negative, likely or unlikely, frequent or rare. As well as statistical information the assessment will be based on professional judgement and with reference to relevant legislation, regulations and policy. Where potential negative effects are identified, possible mitigation measures will be identified if appropriate. Such findings will be considered by the Melton Local Plan Working Group and Full Council at future stages.

4 NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 The Scoping Report (see Appendix 2, Stage A for how this fits into the wider process) provides an initial opportunity for interested parties to comment, and ensure that the final SA report is robust enough to achieve its sustainable development objectives when appraising the new Melton Local Plan. Copies of the SA Scoping Report will be provided to the three statutory consultation bodies, Natural England, English Heritage and the Environment Agency. Members of the public will also be able to view the Scoping Report on the Borough Councils website and make comments via Delib online community engagement software tool.
- 4.2. Once approved the SA Framework will be used to appraise the different policy options within the Melton Local Plan Issues and Options consultation beginning September 2014. At present the SA Scoping Report does not set out a clear process on how the site allocations included within the new Melton Local Plan will be appraised. It is proposed that screening criteria is prepared making use of feedback received from the Reference Groups and consulted on as part of the Local Plan Issues and Options consultation. These screening

criteria will then be applied to all potential sites that come forward through the plan preparation process, in order to support the selection of Preferred Options.

4.3 The SA Framework will be embedded throughout the preparation of the new Melton Local Plan and will go through the following stages:

- Develop and refine alternative options and assess their effects (Melton Local Plan Issues and Options and Preferred Options) – See Stage B of Appendix 2
- SA report on the publication version of the new Melton Local Plan, following public consultation the relevant changes will need to be made to the report – See Stage C Appendix 2
- Once the Local Plan has been subject to independent examination and adopted the SA will be used to monitor and report on the implementation of the Local Plan. See Stage E Appendix 2

4.4 It should be noted that the SA Framework will be kept constantly under review to ensure that the most up to date information as and when it becomes available is used to appraise the potential impacts of the new Melton Local Plan on the existing character of the Borough.

4.5 The Borough Council has gained free professional advice in preparing the SA Scoping report from the Planning Advisory Service, acting as critical friend; their conclusions from reviewing the draft SA report stated that it meets the basic requirements of the SEA Directive.

5 POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This report seeks approval for key documents necessary to progress the Local Plan. The SA Scoping report will have a key role in ensuring the most sustainable planning policies for the Borough are developed through the Local Plan.

6 FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no significant financial or resource implications arising from this report. The SA scoping report is designed to promote sustainable development.

7 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS

7.1 The SA process lies within the European Union's Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive, which acts to ensure that all plans /policies with land use implications take into account environmental issues and impacts.

8 COMMUNITY SAFETY

8.1 There are no significant community safety implications arising from this report.

9 EQUALITIES

9.1 There are no direct equalities impacts arising from SA Scoping Report. The integrated appraisal process has been designed to ensure that equalities impacts are taken into consideration throughout the preparation of the new Melton Local Plan, rather than at the end of the process.

10 RISKS

There are no significant risks arising from the SA Scoping Report.

Probability



There are no significant risks arising from the SA Scoping Report.

Probability



Very High A					Risk No.	Description
High B					1	The risk of challenge that the SA scoping report does not meet the requirements of the SEA Directive
Significant C			1		2	That the statutory consultees will require more extensive baseline information.
Low D		2				
Very Low E						
Almost Impossible F						
	IV Neg- ligible	III Marg- inal	II Critical	I Catast- rophic		

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Impact

11 CLIMATE CHANGE

11.1 The SA scoping report through the preparation of the baseline information has reviewed the relevant plans policies and programmes and collated data in relation to climate change. The SA objectives have been formulated to reduce climate change and to mitigate against the impacts of climate change.

12 CONSULTAION

12.1 The statutory consultees English Heritage, The Environment Agency, Natural England and any other interested parties will be consulted for five weeks, in accordance with the SEA Regulations.

13 WARDS AFFECTED

13.1 This report refers to matters that affect the whole Borough.

Contact Officer: Katie Mills (Planning Policy Officer)

Date: 28th May 2014

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Sustainability Appraisal Non - Technical Summary (attached)

Appendix 2: Diagram of SA process (attached)

Appendix 3 Sustainability Appraisal Scoping (Full Report) (Available Online at <http://www.meltonplan.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Melton-Borough-Council-SA-version-1-21.pdf>

and papers copies in the Member's Room or available from planningpolicy@melton.gov.uk

Background Papers: None