



SUSTAINABILITY MANUAL

Summary Document: Finalised Draft

Sustainable Development Policy Guidance

March 2010

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Sustainable Development Policy Guidance (SDPG) document acts as a useful reference tool for individuals and groups involved in the development process, including those submitting and assessing planning applications to/for West Northamptonshire Development Corporation (WNDC) in accordance with the advice in the WNDC Sustainability Manual Framework document. The SDPG, which should be read alongside the Technology Guide, acts as a background reference document that feeds in to the Framework document and, in the context of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004¹ (the Act), sets out the Development Plan policy position on various components of Sustainable Development together with other material considerations in order to provide a robust basis for decision making through the Framework Document.
- 1.2 The SDPG is divided in to a series of easy to use sections each covering different aspects of the sustainability agenda. These sections will be regularly updated to take account of changes in policy guidance and thereby ensure the document retains its relevance for decision making purposes. The categories covered by the document are;
- General Guidance on Sustainable Development;
 - Climate Change and Energy;
 - Water Supply and Conservation;
 - Flood Risk and Sustainable Drainage;
 - Sustainable Design and Construction;
 - Sustainable Waste Management and Material Use;
 - Pollution of Air, Water and Land;
 - Biodiversity and Land Use;
 - Transport; and
 - Community Investment.
- 1.3 This document is intended to act as quick summary reference guide to the SDPG to aid analysis and understanding. It does not replace the SDPG and for further explanation of policy matters, the principal reference should be the SDPG. Nor does it seek to highlight draft or consultation documents unless they provide for fundamental shift in approach for the Manual.
- 1.4 The following sections of this summary document outline the current Development Plan (Section 2.0), and key Development Plan policies and other material considerations in

¹ Section 38(6) states – ‘If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise’.

respect of each category identified above (Section 3.0). Conclusions are set out in Document 4.

2.0 Development Plan

2.1 Given that Section 38(6) of the Act requires any determination under the Planning Acts to be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, it is important to understand those documents currently comprising the Development Plan for decision making purposes. As the WNDC area includes land within the administrative boundaries of Northampton Borough Council, Daventry District Council, and South Northamptonshire Council, the Development Plan varies at the local level, but the Development Plan is common at the strategic level, as set out in Table 1

DEVELOPMENT PLAN			
	Daventry District Council	Northampton Borough Council	South Northamptonshire Council
Strategic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RSS8: The East Midlands Regional Plan (March 2009) including The Milton Keys and South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy (MKSMSRS) Part B Statement for Northamptonshire (March 2009). • Paragraphs 1-70 of Section 6 comprising Part A of the MKSMSRS (2005) • Saved Policy SDA1 of the Northamptonshire Structure Plan (2001) • The saved policies of the Northamptonshire Minerals Local Plan (2006) • The saved policies of the Northamptonshire Waste Local Plan (2006) 		
Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The saved policies of the Daventry District Local Plan (1997) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The saved policies of the Northampton Local Plan (1997) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The saved policies of the South Northamptonshire Local Plan (1997)

Table 1: The Development Plan

2.2 For the purposes of Section 38(6) of the Act and in determining planning applications, the term ‘material considerations’ has a potentially wide scope. However, given the policy-based focus of the SDPG such material considerations will principally relate to national level policy, including Planning Policy Statements (PPS), Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPG), Circulars, and Ministerial Statements. These documents, alongside Development Plan policies, form the main basis of the policy review in the SDPG.

3.0 Policy Summary

3.1 The SDPG reviews relevant national, regional and local planning policies together with other material considerations against each of the categories of sustainability outlined in the Summary Introduction, with the key findings as follows:

- ***Climate Change and Energy:***

National policy commitments and targets focus on reducing Carbon Dioxide emissions, increasing the proportion of energy supplied from renewable sources, and moving towards zero carbon and zero emission buildings. Such commitments are reinforced through PPS1 'Planning and Climate Change Supplement' and PPS22 'Renewable Energy', which require that Core Strategies and Local Development Documents should provide a positive policy framework that promotes renewable and local carbon energy generation and requires a proportion of the energy supply for new development to be from de-centralised and renewable or low carbon energy sources.

More recently the draft PPS 'Planning for a Low carbon Future in a Changing Climate' echoes this approach and carries this forward to detail how this should be part of plan preparation and site allocations. Further, a number of consultations have been undertaken from which it can be drawn that a shift in emphasis towards a more pragmatic approach to delivery. Key to this, this hierarchical approach comprises three basic elements; an energy efficient approach to building design; reducing carbon dioxide on-site via low and zero carbon technologies and connected heat networks; and mitigating the remaining carbon emissions with a selection of (off-site) Allowable Solutions. Although this approach has as yet to be adopted formally in policy, this does present a clear direction of travel and is significant when considering the interpretation to policy compliance.

The East Midlands Regional Plan (EMRP) applies these principles to the Regional level and seeks to minimise Carbon Dioxide emissions through resource efficiency, use of existing infrastructure, sustainable design and construction and the locational characteristics of development. In addition, the 'energy hierarchy' is promoted as a means of reducing energy use, with a positive policy framework for the consideration of renewable energy development, and targets for energy produced by Combined Heat and Power and District Heating. Local level policies, in the form of Local Plan policy and SPD refer to the Code for Sustainable Homes and energy supply from renewable sources, although the weight to be attached to these targets are limited and clearly need to be tested against advice set within PPS 1 on a case by case basis.

- ***Water Supply and Conservation***

The Water Strategy for England (1998) promotes improvements to drinking water quality and the quality of the water environment, together with the sustainable use of water resources, and the improved management of flood risk. The Strategy also sets expectations for water supply, efficiency and treatment. The EMRP, which takes

account of the principal findings of the Water Resources for the Future: A Strategy for the East Midlands (2001), introduces policies that seek to reduce flood risk and improve water efficiency, sustainable drainage and the management of floodwater. In addition, the EMRP seeks to ensure that locational decisions on major development take account of water-cycle studies, and that through the development process, new development secures the timely provision of water infrastructure, improvements to water efficiency, and meets water consumption targets.

- ***Flood Risk and Sustainable Drainage***

At the heart of PPS25 'Development and Flood Risk' is the need to adopt a risk-based sequential approach to flooding that appraises, manages and reduces the risk by steering development to low risk areas. In addition, depending on the scale, type and location of development, the PPS requires applications for planning permission to be accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment that assesses the flood risk from/of a proposed development.

These requirements are reflected in the policies of the EMRP, that seek to ensure locational decisions on development through the LDF are informed by Strategic Flood Risk Assessments and that inappropriate development in the fluvial floodplain is prevented, with sustainable drainage incorporated in to all new development. Further, development should be avoided that causes an unacceptable risk of flooding, inhibits the capacity of the floodplain, impedes the flow of floodwater or has a detrimental effect on infiltration of rainfall to ground water storage. These policies are being 'rolled-forward' in to the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

- ***Sustainable Design and Construction***

Whilst the principles of sustainable design and construction flow through each chapter of the SDPG, this Chapter sets out the overarching principles of sustainable design from its emergence through the Government document 'Building a Better Quality of Life – a Strategy for More Sustainable Construction' in April 2000. Since then, and as referenced in the other Chapters of the SDPG, there has been a step-change in the understanding and priority given to the principles of sustainable design, and the emergence of quality standards such as the Code for Sustainable Homes and the BRE Environmental Rating Method (BREEAM).

The EMRP promotes, through Policy 1, sustainable design as a means of minimising environmental impacts and, in combination with the other policies of the EMRP considered and reviewed under each Chapter, provides a wide-ranging policy framework at Regional level for securing sustainable development. At the local level, the WNDC 'Code for Design Manuals' and Energy and Development SPD produced jointly by Daventry District Council and South Northamptonshire Council provides further policy guidance.

- ***Sustainable Waste Management and Material Use***

The UK generates 100 million tonnes of waste each year and, whilst recycling rates are improving, a significant proportion of waste goes to landfill. The UK Waste Strategy for England (2007) seeks to increase recycling, reduce the quantity of waste to landfill and encourage the use of recycled materials in new product manufacturing and promotes a now well-established waste hierarchy, that is also recognised in PPS10 'Planning for Sustainable Waste Management' –

- Waste reduction;
- Re-use;
- Recycling and Composting;
- Energy Recovery; and
- Disposal

In addition, all construction and demolition projects with a cost greater than £300,000 are required to be accompanied by a Site Waste Management Plan (SWMP).

The policies of the EMRP require that spatial strategies should reduce the amount of waste produced and increase the amount recycled. Further, policies state that the layout, design and construction of development would be improved by reducing waste and incorporating sustainably sourced material where possible. Emerging policies in the Minerals and Waste Development Framework also seek to secure a sustainable waste management network, promote the sustainable use of recycled materials in construction, reduce waste, and ensure schemes are designed to meet the waste needs of the development.

Pollution of Air, Water and Land.

National planning policy guidance in PPS23 'Planning and Pollution Control' advises that any potential impacts on the quality of land, air or water arising from development is capable of being a material planning consideration. In dealing with such matters, particular emphasis is placed on the locational characteristics of development, resolving issues of contaminated land, the value of pre-application discussions, and the need to adopt a precautionary principle when assessing potential harm.

At a Regional level, policies in the EMRP emphasise the need to reduce pollution through improved design, and highlight the link between pollution control and sustainable drainage/floodwater management. Policies also seek to reduce air

pollution, in recognition of air quality issues in major towns and urban areas, and at the local level confirm that there are many zones vulnerable to flood water.

Biodiversity and Land Use

Biodiversity encompasses the whole variety of life on Earth and at a local level has particular importance in giving a distinctive character to an area. In 1994, the UK Biodiversity Action Plan was adopted and seeks to conserve and enhance biological diversity within the UK. The Strategy provides the framework for national and regional policy, with PPS9 emphasising the need to protect and enhance biodiversity and geological interests, whilst land use policies (PPS1 and PPS3) focus development towards less sensitive, previously developed land. Nevertheless, these land use policies need to be balanced with the impact on biodiversity opportunities in our urban areas.

The EMRP requires that all strategies and plans with a spatial impact should seek to increase the biodiversity of the region by generally protecting natural assets and enhancing Green Infrastructure, especially woodland creation in West Northamptonshire. The emerging Joint Core Strategy reflects these principles, with existing local policies focusing on the protection, rather than enhancement, of existing assets.

Transport

With 21% of total UK carbon dioxide emissions arising from transport activities, the Low Carbon Transport Strategy (2009) seeks to decarbonise road and rail transport by 2050, focusing on support for alternative modes of transport with careful controls over the location of development in order to assist in achieving this aim. The objectives of the Strategy are reflected in national and regional planning policy guidance that generally seeks to reduce the need to travel and encourage accessibility to services and facilities by modes other than the private car. To achieve these aims Regional policies require public transport provision to be considered at the strategic level, major schemes to be carefully planned and designed, carbon dioxide emissions to be minimised, major development to be located to reduce the need to travel, and safe routes to be provided for alternative modes of transport. In addition, approaches that secure behavioural change, such as Travel Plans and improved travel awareness measures are encouraged. These principles are reflected in the policies of the emerging Joint Core Strategy.

Community Investment

Building sustainable, thriving communities is a key planning objective. For the purposes of this study community investment is taken from 'Sustainable Communities in the East Midlands: Building for the Future' (2003) and are defined as investments that:

- Are economically prosperous;
- Have decent homes at a price people can afford;
- Safeguard the Countryside;
- Enjoy a well-designed, accessible and pleasant living and working environment;
and
- Are effectively and fairly governed with a strong sense of community.

The objective of creating sustainable, thriving communities is generally reflected in national level planning policy (PPS1, PPS3, PPG13 and PPG17) and policy 1 of the EMRP. The Emerging Joint Core Strategy also emphasises the importance of creating communities whilst the limited references at a local level concentrate on individual components of community investment such as affordable housing, rural business development, tourism, and recreation and play areas.

4.0 Conclusions

- 4.1 The policy review contained within the Sustainable Development Policy Guidance (SDPG) document highlights the critical and growing importance of the varied aspects of Sustainable Development at a policy level. This is reflected in recent national and regional policy, and is feeding through to the local level in Core Strategies and Development Plan Policies. Placing sustainable development at the heart of planning through these policy frameworks demonstrates to all those involved in the development process of the need to fully embrace sustainable development principles to not only address the causes and effects of climate change, but to ensure the needs of future generations are not compromised.