

Sustainability Appraisal of the Rochford Area Action Plan Submission Document – Schedule of Modifications

August 2014

Rochford District Council – Local Development Framework Rochford Area Action Plan Submission Document Schedule of Modifications: SA Addendum

Sustainability Appraisal of the Rochford Area Action Plan Schedule of Modifications

This report forms an addendum to the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) technical report that accompanied the Rochford Area Action Plan on submission in November 2013. This report seeks to undertake an SA of Rochford District Council's Rochford Area Action Plan Schedule of Modifications. The Schedule of Modifications sets out proposed modifications to the Rochford Area Action Plan Submission Document in light of the hearing sessions that have taken place and the Inspector's recommendations. The SA of proposed modifications does not seek to repeat the assessment carried out for the SA of the Rochford Area Action Submission Document, but rather seeks to assess the modifications made to the policies themselves. This report should therefore be read in conjunction with the SA technical report (November 2013) that accompanied the Rochford Area Action Plan on submission.

The Sustainability Appraisal Process

Throughout the development of the Rochford Area Action Plan the SA process has been used to assist in planning for the development and the use of land, as required by planning legislation and Government guidance, within the centre of Rochford. SA assists sustainable development through an ongoing dialogue and assessment during the preparation of Development Planning Documents (DPDs), and considers the implications of social, economic and environmental demands on land use planning.

An SA scoping process was undertaken to help ensure that the SA covers the key sustainability issues that are relevant to Rochford. This included the development of an SA Framework of objectives to comprise the basis for appraisal. An SA Scoping Report was prepared to summarise the findings of the scoping process and was sent to statutory consultees for consultation in September 2012. As part of the scoping process plans and programmes were reviewed and information was collated relating to the current and predicted social, environmental and economic characteristics of Rochford. The SA Framework for the Rochford Area Action Plan is based on that developed for the Rochford Core Strategy.

Consideration and Appraisal of Alternatives – Issues and Options Document 2009

The SA of the options (alternatives) was undertaken in February 2013. The purpose and key objectives of the AAP have been set at a higher level; therefore it was considered that the alternatives available to the plan-maker in preparing the AAP were limited to the level and type of intervention/ development that should be accommodated in the Town Centre.

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A total of ten sites were identified, including: Market Square and the Spar building to its east side, Back Lane, Rochford Hospital and the rail station car parks, and a number of potential infill sites towards the edge of the centre. A range of options were proposed in relation to each site, which included the redevelopment of existing buildings or vacant plots for residential, retail or office development, or the reconfiguration of existing car parking arrangements to free up land for town centre development.

The options for transport include tighter parking controls and provision of increased information relating to public transport across the AAP area. Transport options for specific areas were also proposed; these included the rerouting of existing one-way traffic to recreate two-way streets and improvements to the pedestrian environment, such as the widening of footways.

The SA found that options which proposed mixed use developments coupled with public realm improvements performed well against SA objectives. Options proposing the redevelopment of buildings considered to have a negative impact on the Rochford Conservation Area were assessed as having the potential for a positive effect on heritage and townscape. Transport options that sought to slow vehicle speeds and improve pedestrian crossings and movement through the Town Centre performed well against SA objectives relating to communities, health, accessibility and the economy.

A number of options were proposed for Market Square and West Street that involved the full or part pedestrianisation of the area. The SA considered that this could provide a number of positive benefits for communities, health and safety, economy and employment, cultural heritage, landscape and townscape and air quality. The SA found that a mix of options could be used in combination to maximise potential long term benefits and potentially by-pass the negative effects that could result from the other Options. Two options proposed the removal of the bus route and taxi rank from the Market Square and West Street, which was assessed as having the potential for a negative effect on elderly and disabled members of the community.

Transport options that sought to slow vehicle speeds and improve pedestrian crossings and movement through the Town Centre performed well against SA objectives relating to communities, health, accessibility and the economy.

Alongside consultation responses, the Council considered the SA findings in its decision making.

Appraisal of the AAP Vision and Policies – Pre-Submission Document 2013

A compatibility analysis of the Pre-Submission AAP Vision and Objectives was carried out using the SA framework in May/June 2013. Overall the vision and objectives were found to be compatible with the majority of SA objectives.

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The Pre-Submission policies were subject to detailed SA in May/June 2013, which appraised the effects of individual policies, as well as the overall effect of the plan, including cumulative and incremental effects. It has also considered and appraised reasonable alternatives to the plan itself; and this information has been made available to the Council to help in the selection of the preferred plan. Overall the SA has found that the AAP will help to resolve a number of key sustainability issues in Rochford Town Centre and will also play a role in improving sustainability in the wider District.

The AAP has the potential for significant long term positive effects on communities, the economy and accessibility through supporting the development of new housing, retail, employment and community services. It also seeks a range of improvements to junctions, the public realm (including signage) and pedestrian links. Greater retail choice and improved pedestrian environments will make the Town Centre a more attractive and enjoyable place for people to shop, work and live. The regeneration of the Town Centre, which includes improved accessibility to housing, employment and facilities along with an enhanced public realm, has the potential for indirect long term positive effects on health, townscape, climate change, the efficient use of land and sustainable design.

There is the potential for negative effects on health, heritage and air quality in the short term during the construction of new development or redevelopment of existing buildings. However, it considered that suitable mitigation is available at the project level to address any adverse effects and suitable protection is provided through Core Strategy and Development Management policies. New development and the redevelopment of existing buildings will need to be carefully and sympathetically designed to ensure that there are no long term negative effects on heritage, particularly on the Rochford Conservation Area.

Uncertainties and Data Gaps

Throughout the development of the AAP and the Sustainability Appraisal process, data gaps and uncertainties were uncovered. It is not always possible to accurately predict sustainability effects when considering plans at this scale. Impacts on cultural heritage, for example, will depend on more detailed information and studies at a site-level. It is also difficult to predict air quality effects and future traffic levels based on interventions. These uncertainties have been acknowledged in the appraisal matrices, where applicable.

Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA)

The HRA suggested that none of the policies in the Rochford Area Action Plan Submission Document are likely to have significant impacts, either alone or in combination, on European Sites. None of the proposed modifications are likely to have any impact on sites protected under the Habitats Directive.

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Sustainability Appraisal Update

The Rochford Area Action Plan Submission Document was submitted to the Secretary of State on 20 November 2013. An examination hearing session was held on 19 February 2014 at which the various aspects of the plan were discussed, including the future of Rochford Market Square. Following this hearing session, the Planning Inspector wrote to Rochford District Council and requested that the Council identify a preferred option for Rochford Market Square for inclusion in the Rochford Area Action Plan.

As part of the examination the Council sought views on which of the options for the Market Square should be the option included in the Area Action Plan – the option the Council will seek to realise for the Market Square. The consultation ran from 25 March to 8 May 2014, and focussed solely on the options for the Market Square.

The results of the consultation were discussed at a meeting of Members, Rochford District Council Planning Officers and Essex County Council Highway Officers on 22 July 2014, where the preferred option for the Market Square was agreed. The Inspector's suggested proposed amendments to the Submission Document, including a preferred option for the Market Square, have been integrated into the Schedule of Modifications. The main modifications relate to all policies, with the exception of Policy 4.

As per the SA of the Rochford Area Action Plan Submission Document, the appraisal recognised six categories of predicted effects, as illustrated in the key below. For further information on the method used for the SA, please refer to the SA technical report for the Rochford Area Action Plan Submission Document.

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Categories of sustainability effects	
Colour	Impact
++	Major Positive
+	Positive
0	No Impact
?	Uncertain
-	Negative
--	Major Negative

A scoping exercise of the Schedule of Modifications was undertaken to determine which of the proposed modifications to the Plan would likely have an impact on the SA objectives. It was determined as a result that an appraisal of the potential sustainability effects of the proposed modifications to the policies, as opposed to the accompanying text, should be undertaken. In addition, it should be noted that the following includes an assessment of the effects of the proposed amendments to the policy, as opposed to simply the amended policies themselves. As such, it should be read in conjunction with the SA of the Submission Document.

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Policy 1 – Rochford Area Action Plan Framework (MM4)

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
1. Balanced Communities	The proposed modification to increase retail floorspace within the town centre could have a positive impact through encouraging regeneration and improving access to such facilities within the town centre.	+
2. Healthy & Safe Communities	No significant effects identified.	0
3. Housing	No significant effects identified.	0
4. Economy & Employment	Increasing the proportion of retail floorspace within the town centre would have a positive impact through increasing consumer choice and employment opportunities in this location.	+
5. Accessibility	The proposed modification could have a positive impact through increasing access to jobs, shopping and services.	+
6. Biodiversity	No significant effects identified.	0
7. Cultural Heritage	The inclusion of criteria to ensure that appropriate consideration of above ground heritage assets and below ground archaeological deposits in any proposal would have a positive impact on cultural heritage.	+
8. Landscape & Townscape	No significant effects identified.	0
9. Climate Change & Energy	No significant effects identified.	0

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SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
10. Water	No significant effects identified.	0
11. Land & Soil	No significant effects identified.	0
12. Air Quality	No significant effects identified.	0
13. Sustainable Design & Construction	No significant effects identified.	0

Policy 2 – Rochford’s Primary Shopping Area (MM9)

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
1. Balanced Communities	The proposed modification would clarify the circumstances when a non-retail use would be appropriate within the centre, which would have a positive impact on the mix of uses within Rochford’s primary shopping area and the vitality of the town centre.	+
2. Healthy & Safe Communities	No significant effects identified.	0
3. Housing	No significant effects identified.	0

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SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
4. Economy & Employment	The modification to the policy would help to support the vitality and viability of Rochford's primary shopping area by encouraging an appropriate mix of uses within the town centre.	+
5. Accessibility	No significant effects identified.	0
6. Biodiversity	No significant effects identified.	0
7. Cultural Heritage	No significant effects identified.	0
8. Landscape & Townscape	No significant effects identified.	0
9. Climate Change & Energy	No significant effects identified.	0
10. Water	No significant effects identified.	0
11. Land & Soil	No significant effects identified.	0
12. Air Quality	No significant effects identified.	0
13. Sustainable Design & Construction	No significant effects identified.	0

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Policy 3 – Rochford’s Secondary Shopping Frontage (MM10)

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
1. Balanced Communities	The proposed modification would clarify the circumstances when a non-retail use would be appropriate within the centre, which would have a positive impact on the mix of uses within Rochford’s secondary shopping frontage and the vitality of the town centre.	+
2. Healthy & Safe Communities	No significant effects identified.	0
3. Housing	No significant effects identified.	0
4. Economy & Employment	The modification to the policy would help to support the vitality and viability of Rochford’s secondary shopping frontage by encouraging an appropriate mix of uses within the town centre.	+
5. Accessibility	No significant effects identified.	0
6. Biodiversity	No significant effects identified.	0
7. Cultural Heritage	No significant effects identified.	0
8. Landscape & Townscape	No significant effects identified.	0
9. Climate Change & Energy	No significant effects identified.	0

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SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
10. Water	No significant effects identified.	0
11. Land & Soil	No significant effects identified.	0
12. Air Quality	No significant effects identified.	0
13. Sustainable Design & Construction	No significant effects identified.	0

Policy 5 – Rochford’s Character Areas (MM12)

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
1. Balanced Communities	No significant effects identified.	0
2. Healthy & Safe Communities	No significant effects identified.	0
3. Housing	No significant effects identified.	0

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SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
4. Economy & Employment	No significant effects identified.	0
5. Accessibility	No significant effects identified.	0
6. Biodiversity	No significant effects identified.	0
7. Cultural Heritage	The inclusion of criteria to ensure that appropriate consideration of above ground heritage assets and below ground archaeological deposits in any proposal would have a positive impact on cultural heritage.	+
8. Landscape & Townscape	No significant effects identified.	0
9. Climate Change & Energy	No significant effects identified.	0
10. Water	No significant effects identified.	0
11. Land & Soil	No significant effects identified.	0
12. Air Quality	No significant effects identified.	0
13. Sustainable Design & Construction	No significant effects identified.	0

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Policy 6 – Character Area A: Central Area (MM13)

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
1. Balanced Communities	The proposed modification would have a positive longer term impact on this objective. It would support an older population through retaining the taxi rank and increasing the number of car parking spaces in this central location.	+
2. Healthy & Safe Communities	No significant effects identified.	0
3. Housing	No significant effects identified.	0
4. Economy & Employment	No significant effects identified.	0
5. Accessibility	Retaining the taxi rank and increasing the number of car parking spaces in this central location would have a positive long term impact on accessibility, particularly for the older or less able members of the population.	+
6. Biodiversity	No significant effects identified.	0
7. Cultural Heritage	Retaining the existing car park in the Market Square will continue to have a long term impact on the setting of heritage assets and the wider Conservation Area.	?
8. Landscape & Townscape	The proposed modification to retain the existing car park in the Market Square would continue to impact on the character of the town in the longer term.	?
9. Climate Change	No significant effects identified.	0

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SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
& Energy		
10. Water	No significant effects identified.	0
11. Land & Soil	No significant effects identified.	0
12. Air Quality	Retaining the existing car park would continue to encourage traffic through the town centre.	?
13. Sustainable Design & Construction	No significant effects identified.	0

Policy 7 – Character Area B: Northern/Eastern Approach (MM17)

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
1. Balanced Communities	The proposed modification removing the reference to the development of community facilities, particularly aimed at young people in this location, could have a longer term negative impact on this objective, if such facilities are not provided elsewhere in the AAP. However, the inclusion of the requirement for the opportunity site to include, in the region of, an additional 750sq.m. of retail floorspace would have a positive impact on balanced communities through increasing shopping opportunities in the town.	? +

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SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
2. Healthy & Safe Communities	The proposed removal of the reference to the development of community facilities particularly aimed at young people in this policy could have a longer term negative impact on this objective, if such facilities are not provided elsewhere in the AAP.	?
3. Housing	Removing the requirement to provide youth facilities in this location would likely mean that a greater proportion of residential units could be provided which would have a positive impact.	+
4. Economy & Employment	The inclusion of the requirement for the opportunity site to include, in the region of, an additional 750sq.m. of retail floorspace would have a positive impact on this objective in longer term through increasing shopping, consumer choice and job opportunities in the town.	+
5. Accessibility	The proposed modification removing the reference to the development of community facilities, particularly aimed at young people in this location, could have a longer term negative impact on accessibility, if such facilities are not provided elsewhere in the AAP. However, the proposed modification to increase retail floorspace would likely have a positive long term impact on accessibility, particularly for the older or less able members of the population.	? +
6. Biodiversity	No significant effects identified.	0
7. Cultural Heritage	No significant effects identified.	0
8. Landscape & Townscape	No significant effects identified.	0
9. Climate Change	No significant effects identified.	0

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SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
& Energy		
10. Water	No significant effects identified.	0
11. Land & Soil	The proposed amendment to promote the site for a mixed development of residential and retail uses would likely have a positive impact on this objective through potentially safeguarding other land in the District, particularly greenfield land, from development.	? +
12. Air Quality	No significant effects identified.	0
13. Sustainable Design & Construction	No significant effects identified.	0

Policy 8 – Character Area C: Southern Approach (MM19)

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
1. Balanced Communities	The proposed amendment to the policy would promote the development of community facilities, particularly those catering for young people in this location, which would likely have a longer term positive impact on this objective.	+

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SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
2. Healthy & Safe Communities	No significant effects identified.	0
3. Housing	The inclusion of reference to the development of residential units at the Police Station opportunity site in the policy would likely have a positive impact on this objective in the long term.	+
4. Economy & Employment	No significant effects identified.	0
5. Accessibility	No significant effects identified.	0
6. Biodiversity	No significant effects identified.	0
7. Cultural Heritage	No significant effects identified.	0
8. Landscape & Townscape	No significant effects identified.	0
9. Climate Change & Energy	No significant effects identified.	0
10. Water	No significant effects identified.	0
11. Land & Soil	The proposed amendment to promote the site for residential uses would likely have a positive impact on this objective through potentially safeguarding other land in the District, particularly greenfield land, from	? +

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SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
	development.	
12. Air Quality	No significant effects identified.	0
13. Sustainable Design & Construction	No significant effects identified.	0

Policy 9 – Character Area D: Western Approach (MM21)

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
1. Balanced Communities	No significant effects identified.	0
2. Healthy & Safe Communities	No significant effects identified.	0
3. Housing	The proposed amendment to the policy to support the development of residential units at the Freight House opportunity site would likely have a positive impact on this objective in the long term.	+
4. Economy &	The inclusion of reference to the development of business uses such as offices and/or assembly/leisure uses at the Freight House opportunity site in the policy would likely have a long term positive impact on this	+

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SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
Employment	objective.	
5. Accessibility	The potential development of additional uses in the location could have a positive impact on accessibility.	+
6. Biodiversity	No significant effects identified.	0
7. Cultural Heritage	No significant effects identified.	0
8. Landscape & Townscape	No significant effects identified.	0
9. Climate Change & Energy	No significant effects identified.	0
10. Water	No significant effects identified.	0
11. Land & Soil	The proposed amendment to promote the site for residential, business and assembly/leisure uses would likely have a positive impact on this objective through potentially safeguarding other land in the District, particularly greenfield land, from development.	? +
12. Air Quality	No significant effects identified.	0
13. Sustainable Design & Construction	No significant effects identified.	0