

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

October 2013

Sustainability Appraisal of the Hockley Area Action Plan Schedule of Modifications

This report forms an addendum to the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) technical report that accompanied the Hockley Area Action Plan on submission in April 2013. This report seeks to undertake an SA of Rochford District Council's Hockley Area Action Plan Schedule of Modifications. The Schedule of Modifications sets out proposed modifications to the Hockley 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 Hockley 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 (April 2013) that accompanied the Hockley Area Action Plan on Submission.

The Sustainability Appraisal Process

Throughout the development of the Hockley 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 Hockley centre. SA assists sustainable development through an ongoing dialogue and assessment during the preparation of LDF Development Planning Documents (DPDs), and considers the implications of social, economic and environmental demands on land use planning.

A SA scoping process was undertaken to help ensure that the SA covers the key sustainability issues that are relevant to Hockley. 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 July 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 Hockley. The SA Framework for the Hockley Area Action Plan is based on that developed for the Rochford Core Strategy.

Consideration and Appraisal of Alternatives – Options Report 2010

The SA of the options (alternatives) was undertaken in July 2012. 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. Three spatial options were considered:

- Spatial Option 1: A low level of intervention
- Spatial Option 2: A medium level of intervention, with increased housing, retail and office provision

- Spatial Option 3: A high level of intervention, similar to Option 2, but with a higher level again of housing and office provision.

A further 3 options were considered around more detailed transport interventions; looking at Spa roundabout, on-street parking provision and drop-off provision at Hockley Railway station.

For social and economic reasons, the SA found that spatial options 2 and 3 would have the most sustainability benefits, but it also recognised that these 2 options were more likely to cause increased disruption (noise and congestion) and air pollution during the construction phase of development. The SA includes recommendations to mitigate any adverse impacts and also considered the various transport options in more detail. Alongside consultation responses, the Council considered the SA findings in its decision making and subsequently chose an amalgamation of spatial options 2 and 3.

Appraisal of the AAP Vision and Policies – Pre-Submission Document 2012

A compatibility analysis of the Pre-Submission AAP Vision and Objectives was carried out using the SA framework in October 2012. Overall the vision and objectives were found to be compatible with the majority of SA objectives.

The Pre-Submission policies were subject to detailed SA in October 2012. On the whole, the findings of the SA suggest that the emerging Area Action Plan policies will make significant contributions to the progression of SA objectives. Throughout the development of the Area Action Plan and the Sustainability Appraisal process, data gaps and uncertainties were uncovered and these have been acknowledged in the appraisal matrices, where applicable.

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.

Sustainability Appraisal Update

The Hockley Area Action Plan Submission Document was submitted to the Secretary of State on 18 April 2013. The examination hearings began on 17 September 2013 and following the discussions and consideration of the representations received a number of modifications to

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the Hockley Area Action Plan Submission Document have been proposed. This report appraises the modifications proposed within the Submission Document. The key modifications relate to policies 1, 4, 6, 7 and 8.

As per the SA of the Hockley 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 Hockley Area Action Plan Submission Document.

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.

Policy 1 – Hockley Area Action Plan Framework (MM3, MM4 and MM5)

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 modifications to the policy would have a positive medium-long term impact on regeneration in the centre through clarifying how the Council foresees the development of the Eldon Way Opportunity Site.	+
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	The modifications would clarify the relationship and the proposed integration between the Opportunity Site and the wider area of Hockley centre over the plan period, helping to ensure accessibility of future development.	+
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 4 – Increasing availability of housing (MM8 and 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	No significant effects identified.	0
2. Healthy & Safe Communities	No significant effects identified.	0
3. Housing	No significant effects identified.	0
4. Economy &	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)	
Employment		
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

Policy 6 – Improving retail choice for local people (MM14)

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
1. Balanced Communities	<p>The proposed modification would have a positive impact on the regeneration of Hockley centre through encouraging additional retail capacity within the Eldon Way Opportunity Site whilst favouring the development of smaller units and the expansion of existing units. The policy would still enable the development of a larger retail unit, provided it can be demonstrated that the proposal would ensure retention of retail expenditure within the centre.</p> <p>The policy would seek to improve Hockley’s retail offer and strengthen the role of its centre as a shopping destination for local residents. This will have a long-term positive effect on this SA objective by enhancing consumer choice and improving accessibility for all the community.</p>	+
2. Healthy & Safe Communities	No significant effects identified.	0
3. Housing	No significant effects identified.	0
4. Economy & Employment	Favouring smaller units and the expansion of existing units could have a positive impact on local businesses through encouraging a mix of uses within the centre. However, the policy modification would still enable the development of a larger retail unit, provided it can be demonstrated that the proposal would ensure retention of retail expenditure within Hockley. Consumer choice would be enhanced.	+
5. Accessibility	No significant effects identified.	0
6. Biodiversity	No significant effects identified.	0
7. Cultural Heritage	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)	
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

Policy 7 – Ensuring a healthy centre (MM23)

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, particularly in the primary shopping frontage, which would have a positive impact on the mix of uses within Hockley and the vitality of the centre.	+

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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	No significant effects identified.	0
4. Economy & Employment	The modification to the policy would help to support the vitality and viability of Hockley by encouraging an appropriate mix of uses within the centre, particularly within the primary shopping frontage.	+
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

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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)	
13. Sustainable Design & Construction	No significant effects identified.	0

Policy 8 – Encouraging leisure opportunities (MM25)

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
4. Economy & Employment	No significant effects identified.	0
5. Accessibility	No significant effects identified.	0
6. Biodiversity	No significant effects identified.	0

SA Objective	Assessment of Effects	
	Nature of the predicted sustainability effect (positive/negative, short/medium/long term, cumulative, scale, reversibility, likelihood)	
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

Summary:

The aims of the Plan, set out in Policy 1, were found to be consistent with the SA Framework objectives developed for the Hockley Area Action Plan, and the predicted overall result is one that is very positive for sustainability. The proposed modification to the policy would have a positive impact on the balanced communities and accessibility SA objectives over the plan period through providing clarity on development of the Eldon Way Opportunity Site, and the relationship and the proposed integration between the Opportunity Site and the wider area.

The alternative wording proposed for Policies 6 and 7 would ensure a greater positive impact on the balanced communities and economy and employment SA objectives than currently worded. Favouring smaller units and the extension of existing units within Policy 6 would have positive impacts for regeneration, consumer choice and local businesses, although proposals for a larger retail unit would still be considered. The amendments proposed for Policy 7 would clarify when a non-retail use would be appropriate, which would encourage an appropriate mix of uses within the centre of Hockley and would have a positive impact on the vitality and viability of the centre.

The proposed modifications to policies 4 and 8 are not predicted to have any significant effects on the SA objectives, and so the policies would continue to have a positive effect on a number of the objectives as detailed in the SA technical report for the Submission Document.