



# **Rochford District Council Local Development Plan**

## **Rayleigh Area Action Plan**

### **SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL/ STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF PRE-SUBMISSION AAP**

#### **NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

**December 2013**

# Rochford District Council Local Development Framework

## Rayleigh Area Action Plan

### SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL/ STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF PRE- SUBMISSION AAP

### NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

*for and on behalf of Enfusion Ltd:*

<i>date:</i>	December 2013	
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## **NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

- 0.1 This is the summary of the Sustainability Appraisal Report for Rochford District Council's Rayleigh Area Action Plan (AAP) Development Planning Document (DPD): Pre-Submission Document. It describes how the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) process was used to assist in the preparation of the Area Action Plan, as required by planning legislation and Government guidance.

### **SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL & STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

- 0.2 The purpose of Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is to promote sustainable development through the integration of environmental, social and economic considerations in the preparation of Local Development Documents (LDDs). This requirement is set out in Section 39 (2) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004 and the National Planning Policy Framework. Sustainability Appraisal incorporates the requirements of Strategic Environmental Assessment<sup>12</sup> (SEA), a requirement of European and UK Legislation. Government guidance advises a number of stages of SA work that need to be carried out as a Local Development Document is being prepared:

- Stage A: Setting Context & Scope
- Stage B: Developing Options & Assessing Effects
- Stage C: Preparing the SA Report
- Stage D: Consulting on the Plan & the SA
- Stage E: Monitoring Implementation of the Plan

- 0.3 The SA/SEA of the Rayleigh Area Action Plan has been prepared in accordance with these requirements for SA/SEA.

### **THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND RAYLEIGH AAP**

- 0.4 The Council is in the process of preparing its Local Development Plan (LDP) (previously known as the Local Development Framework), which will set out how the District will develop in the future. The LDP will gradually replace the Rochford District Replacement Local Plan which was adopted in 2006. The Rochford Local Development Plan comprises the following Local Development Documents:

- Core Strategy DPD (also known as the Local Plan)
- Development Management DPD
- Site Allocations DPD
- Area Action Plans (DPDs) for Rochford Town Centre, Hockley Town Centre, Rayleigh Town Centre and London Southend Airport (with Southend-on-Sea Borough Council).

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<sup>1</sup> EU Directive 2001/42/EC

<sup>2</sup> Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

- 0.5 The Rayleigh Area Action Plan (AAP) creates a policy framework for development of Rayleigh from which applications for planning permission will be determined against. The AAP sets out a vision for the future which declares that Rayleigh will continue to be recognised as Rochford District's main centre and that new development will help to enhance the centre's historic setting.
- 0.6 The AAP sets a vision for the settlement's future based on an understanding of the unique context that drives change and development in Rayleigh. It translates this vision into implementation objectives, policies and guidance that will act as a robust framework for delivery.

### THE CHARACTER OF RAYLEIGH

- 0.7 Rayleigh town centre is situated in the south west of the District, approximately 32 miles from London and 4.9 miles from Southend-on-Sea. It is the largest retail centre in the District with a strong comparison and convenience offer, low vacancy rates and a range of unit sizes.
- 0.8 A large portion of the town centre is designated as a Conservation Area and includes a number of listed buildings as well as the Rayleigh Mount, which is designated as a Scheduled Monument.

### SA SCOPING & ISSUES FOR SUSTAINABILITY

- 0.9 A SA scoping process was undertaken to help ensure that the SA covers the key sustainability issues that are relevant to Rayleigh. 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 Rayleigh.
- 0.10 From these studies, the key sustainability issues and opportunities for the AAP and the SA were identified, as follows:

Key Sustainability Issues for Rayleigh AAP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The provision of quality and affordable housing to meet housing needs in Rayleigh.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improve the connectivity between the High Street, Rayleigh Mount, the Windmill and Mill Arts and Leisure Centre.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improve the connectivity between the High Street and the main town centre parking facility on Websters Way.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reduce traffic along Websters Way and improve pedestrian movement.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Taking account of environmental and physical constraints when accommodating new development.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Opportunity to improve the public realm and pedestrian movement.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The protection of the Rayleigh Conservation Area and listed</li> </ul>

buildings.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High levels of car ownership and travelling to work using a private vehicle.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Air quality concerns in Rayleigh High Street and Eastwood Road (an AQMA is being designated) which may restrict new traffic-generating development.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunity to improve retail and provide a greater range of leisure service providers, comparison goods and mixed-use schemes incorporating floorspace.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Climate change is a significant issue facing all communities and the AAP will need to consider issues around energy efficiency, renewables and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.</li> </ul>

### SA FRAMEWORK

- 0.11 An SA Framework was compiled and included SA Objectives that aim to resolve the issues and problems identified; these are used to test the draft plan as it is being prepared. The SA Framework for Rayleigh AAP is based on that developed for the Rochford Core Strategy. A list of the SA objective headings follows:

SA Objective headings	
1. Balanced Communities	8. Landscape & Townscape
2. Healthy & Safe Communities	9. Climate Change & Energy
3. Housing	10. Water
4. Economy & Employment	11. Land & Soil
5. Accessibility	12. Air Quality
6. Biodiversity	13. Sustainable Design & Construction
7. Cultural Heritage	

### SA OF THE RAYLEIGH AAP

- 0.12 Each stage of the preparation of the AAP was appraised using the SA Objectives. Where significant negative effects, including environmental effects, were predicted, the SA sought where possible to identify means of offsetting these effects. Where it was considered that there were opportunities to enhance the sustainability of the proposals, recommendations were made. The appraisal recognised 6 categories of predicted effects, as illustrated in the following key.

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

## **CONSIDERATION AND APPRAISAL OF ALTERNATIVES**

- 0.13 The SA of the options (alternatives) was undertaken in November 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.
- 0.14 The Issues and Options Document (2009) identified a number of areas within the town centre where opportunities may exist for redevelopment, as well as a range of opportunities related to transport and circulation and the public realm. A range of options were proposed in relation to each area and some involved a number of key aspects which included the redevelopment of existing buildings or vacant for mixed-uses, or the redevelopment of existing businesses to enlarge existing car parking facilities. Some options were devised using a number of interventions which would result in differing levels of change i.e. low, medium, high and/or higher.
- 0.15 The options which proposed interventions which sought to improve the quality and attractiveness of particular areas, supported mixed-use development and/ or improve pedestrian links were found to progress many of the SA objectives relating to communities, health, accessibility, the economy, heritage, townscape and sustainable design. The significance of effects was found to increase along with the level of intervention. However, with a higher level of intervention there is also some uncertainty and this was because the proposed development could have the potential for negative effects in the short-term on SA objectives through increased noise and congestion. The SA also found that options which recommended full pedestrianisation may have negative effects on communities and health as they could potentially shift existing traffic issues elsewhere within the AAP area creating another barrier to movement.
- 0.16 Furthermore, with reference to the spatial options, it was considered that composite option that sought the higher level of intervention proposed in option 4 with the shared space treatments proposed in option 3 (rather than the pedestrianisation of the High Street), would not require the diversion of traffic and would provide greater benefits to a wider area.
- 0.17 Alongside consultation responses, the Council considered the SA findings in its decision making. The reasons for the selection or rejection of options in plan-making are set out in Section 4 of the SA Report.

## **APPRAISAL OF THE AAP VISION AND POLICIES**

- 0.18 A compatibility analysis of the Pre-Submission AAP Vision and Objectives was carried out using the SA framework in December 2013. Overall the vision and objectives were found to be compatible with the majority of SA objectives.
- 0.19 The Pre-Submission policies were subject to detailed SA in December 2013. On the whole, the findings of the SA suggest that the emerging AAP policies will make significant contributions to the progression of SA objectives.

Throughout the development of the AAP and the Sustainability Appraisal process, data gaps and uncertainties were uncovered and these have been acknowledged in the appraisal matrices, where applicable.

### SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS IDENTIFIED

- 0.20 The majority of policies were found to have significant positive sustainability benefits. The following table summarises the key positive effects identified:

<b>Significant positive effects of the emerging Rayleigh AAP</b>	
<b>Key relevant SA Objective:</b>	<b>Positive effects identified:</b>
1.Balanced communities & 2.Healthy and Safe Communities	The AAP will have positive effects on communities through providing a mix of uses in the town centre, including retail, cultural, leisure facilities and new public spaces. New, improved and enhanced pedestrian links should encourage more people to get out and about and improve their fitness. Improving the quality of the area could help reduce the incidence of crime and the potential for new employment opportunities will have positive indirect effects on the health of the community. The combination of these effects is likely to lead to significant positive cumulative effects.
4.Economy and Employment	A significant positive effect on the local economy is likely through enhanced opportunities for retail, leisure and offices. It seeks to enhance consumer choice through encouraging opportunities for development in addition to the main focus on retail which should provide more employment opportunities (skilled and unskilled) for local residents. It also seeks to strengthen pedestrian links across Rayleigh which is likely to provide better access for consumers and workers to the centre of Rayleigh thereby boosting the local economy. Improvements to the public realm will also make the town centre a more attractive and enjoyable place for people to shop, visit and live. The combination of these effects is likely to lead to significant positive cumulative effects.
5. Accessibility	Significant positive cumulative effects for accessibility are likely through a range of improvements to the public realm, upgrades to bus facilities, access to the train station and increased accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists.
6.Landscape and Townscape	The setting of key principles for development to contribute positively to the local townscape and character, focusing on the individual parts of the AAP area, is likely to lead to positive cumulative effects. In addition, the combined requirements for enhancing the public realm and the likely

	redevelopment of derelict, degraded or underused land will also contribute to an overall significant positive cumulative effect.
7. Cultural Heritage	The main thrust of the AAP is to ensure that the historic character of the centre is protected and where possible enhanced. It advocates new and improved pedestrian signage to key cultural heritage assets such as the Mount and the Windmill which will hopefully improve access to heritage. Furthermore, public realm interventions and regeneration are likely to help improve the aesthetic value of the AAP area which is likely to benefit the conservation area and the settings of the listed buildings. The combination of these effects is likely to lead to significant positive cumulative effects.

- 0.21 Alongside the many positive effects of the plan, potential negative sustainability effects were also identified, although the effect is uncertain at this stage of the assessment and it is considered likely that these effects can be mitigated at a more detailed planning stage. These are summarised below:

<b>Potentially significant negative effects of the emerging Rayleigh AAP</b>	
<b>Key relevant SA Objective:</b>	<b>Negative Effects identified:</b>
7. Cultural Heritage	Some temporary negative effects in the short-term during demolition/ construction as noise and vibration will be created but it is expected that this can be mitigated at the project level. Any other effects were considered to be mitigated by policies contained within the Core Strategy and Development Management DPDs.
2. Healthy and Safe Communities and 12. Air quality	There have been exceedences of the annual mean air quality objective for nitrogen dioxide at Eastwood Road/Rayleigh High Street and Eastwood Road. Any new development has the potential to increase nitrogen dioxide levels in the both the short-term and the long-term. Mitigation already in place through Core Strategy Policies.  There may be some temporary negative effects in the short-term during demolition/ construction as waste, noise and dust nuisances may be created but it is expected that this can be mitigated at the project level.

### **MITIGATION, ENHANCEMENT AND MONITORING**

- 0.22 An important role of the SA process is to provide recommendations for the mitigation of negative effects and enhancement of the positive effects identified in the appraisal process. In preparing the AAP, Rochford District



Council has already sought to address many of the sustainability problems in Rayleigh, and consequently the majority of the SA findings were positive. A small number of recommendations have been made and these will be considered by the Council in finalising the plan.

- 0.23 Local planning authorities are required to produce Annual Monitoring Reports to monitor the progress of the Local Development Plan. There is also a requirement to monitor the predictions made in the SA. Rochford District Council prepares an Annual Monitoring report each year, and in preparing the report, considers any recommendations made through the SA process. The indicators and targets suggested for the SA monitoring of the Core Strategy are considered appropriate for the monitoring of the Rayleigh AAP, with additional specific suggestions made during the preparation of the Rayleigh AAP. This SA has also made further suggestions, which are detailed in the main SA report.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS**

- 0.24 The SA of the Rayleigh Area Action Plan has 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 Rayleigh Town Centre and will also play a role in improving sustainability in the wider Rochford District. Significant positive effects were identified for communities, economy and employment, accessibility, landscape and townscape and cultural heritage.
- 0.25 The sustainability appraisal did not identify any significant likely negative effects from the plan alone. However, possible significant cumulative negative effects were identified for cultural heritage, healthy and safe communities and air quality. It is expected that these can be mitigated and managed through further detailed planning, monitoring as well as by policies already in place which are contained within the Core Strategy and Development Management DPDs. To reduce short-term negative effects on cultural heritage and on health, it was also recommended that either a construction management plan could be developed or phasing could be introduced at the project level.
- 0.26 The Council has considered the recommendations made throughout the Sustainability Appraisal process, and amended the plan where appropriate. This has contributed to further enhancing the positive sustainability effects of the AAP.
- 0.27 This SA Report will accompany the AAP on Pre-Submission consultation for 6 weeks, during which time interested parties are invited to make representations on the AAP or the SA. The SA will form part of the evidence base during the Examination of the AAP and if any further significant changes are made to the plan the SA Report will be updated accordingly. A finalised report will accompany the adopted DPD when it is published.