



Walton Neighbourhood Plan – Submission Draft

Statement of Reasons why no Strategic Environmental
Assessment is required.

April 2015

This Report is the Statement of Reasons why a Strategic Environmental Assessment is not required for the Walton Neighbourhood Plan – Submission Draft (WNP).

In accordance with Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Regulations and SA Guidance, the Walton Neighbourhood Plan Sustainability Appraisal (April 2015) incorporates SEA criteria as part of the wider SA process, which aims to fulfil the requirements of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004.

The sustainability appraisal process is designed to ensure that the principles of sustainable development are incorporated into planning policy at all levels. Sustainability appraisal is a requirement of the EC Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the impacts of certain plans and programmes on the environment. It is implemented in England through the 'Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004'.

The requirement for a SEA emerges from Schedule 10, paragraph 8(2)(f) of the Localism Act which states that a draft Neighbourhood Development Order or Plan “meets the basic conditions if the making of the order does not breach, and is otherwise compatible with, EU obligations”. In this case, the relevant EU obligations are represented by the SEA Directive.

This SA has been prepared with support from Wakefield Metropolitan District Council. This SA has considered the plan, its objectives and policies, against sustainability criteria. The following is taken from the SA:

Requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive

The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004) (the SEA Regulations), which implements European Directive 2001/42/EC, known as the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive, require SEA of a wide range of plans and programmes, including LDFs. SEA is a process to ensure that significant environmental effects arising from certain plans and programmes are identified, assessed, mitigated, communicated to decision-makers, and monitored, and that opportunities for public involvement are provided.

The objective of the SEA Directive is:

'to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans, with a view to promoting sustainable development EC Directive 2001/42/EC'.

The SEA Directive places certain requirements, which must be addressed through the assessment and reporting process. These are the same for all SEA assessments, irrespective of whether or not they are incorporated into sustainability appraisal, as they are in this case. The following table lists the requirements of the Directive, all of which will be covered by the WNP:

Table 2: Requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive

Preparation of an environmental report, in which the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme, and reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan or programme, are identified, described and evaluated. The information to be given is (Article 5 and Annex I):

- a) An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme, and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes;
- b) The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme;
- c) The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;
- d) Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme, including, in particular, those relating to any areas of particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43 EEC;
- e) The environmental protection objectives, established at international community or national level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation;
- f) The likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors. (Footnote: These effects should include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects);
- g) The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme;
- h) an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information;
- i) A description of measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Article 10;
- j) A non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings

The report must include the information that may reasonably be required taking into account current knowledge and methods of assessment, the contents and level of detail in the plan or programme, its stage in the decision-making process, and the extent to which certain matters are more appropriately assessed at different levels in that process to avoid duplication of the assessment (Article 5.2)

- Consultation: authorities with environmental responsibility, when deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information which must be included in the environmental report (Article 5.4)
- authorities with environmental responsibility and the public, shall be given an early and effective opportunity within appropriate time frames to express their opinion on the draft plan or programme and the accompanying environmental report before the adoption of the plan or programme

(Article 6.1, 6.2)

- other EU Member States, where the implementation of the plan or programme is likely to have significant effects on the environment of that country (Article 7)

Provision of information on the decision:

When the plan or programme is adopted, the public and any countries consulted under Article 7 must be informed and the following made available to those informed:

- the plan or programme as adopted;
- a statement summarising how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme and how the environmental report of Article 5, the opinions expressed pursuant to Article 6, and the results of consultations entered into pursuant to Article 7, have been taken into account in accordance with Article 8, and the reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and
- the measures decided concerning monitoring (Article 9)

Monitoring of the significant environmental of the plan's or programme's implementation (Article 10)

Quality Assurance: environmental reports should be of a sufficient standard to meet the requirements of the SEA Directive

As the SEA and SA are very closely related this SA has integrated sustainability issues into decision making by appraising the plan using environmental, social and economic objectives. SEA also aims to facilitate sustainable development, but its emphasis is on integrating environmental considerations into decision making through a thorough analysis of environmental issues.

Prior to the preparation of this document a Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report was prepared and sent to the Environment Agency, Natural England and English Heritage for comment. They did not have any issues with proposed methodology for the SA framework. The Initial SA was published for consultation at the Consultation Draft stage of the WNP.

An Appropriate Assessment Screening Report was also prepared and sent to Natural England for comment. They agreed with the conclusion of the report in that the WNP “is unlikely to significantly affect Denby Grange Colliery Special Area of Conservation (SAC) or other protected nature conservation site.”

Overall the Neighbourhood Plan has a good performance on sustainability issues. There are no significant areas where sustainability has not been addressed.

As Walton is a village the higher level local plan sets out that only small scale development will take place where it helps to meet identified local needs within the settlement boundary. On this basis no sites are proposed for development.

In accordance with the plan's vision statement the draft WNP largely seeks to protect and enhance existing community assets and linkages and to create new ones. Most of the policies in the plan are the result of extensive community participation and consultation and therefore focus on local need and equality for all members of the community. As sustainability was an important factor throughout the preparation of the draft WNP then only sustainable and beneficial policies were included.

Conclusion

In light of the above, Walton Parish Council conclude that there is no need to undertake an SEA of the Walton Neighbourhood Plan – Submission Draft.