

Bromsgrove District Council and Redditch Borough Council **Planning**



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Housing Growth Sustainability Appraisal (SA)

Non-Technical
Summary



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Introduction

This document comprises of an assessment of the sustainability impacts of all realistic growth options around the edge of Redditch Town and supplements the Housing Growth Development Study. The aim of the SA has been to ensure that the principles of sustainable development are fully integrated into the housing growth work and the associated emerging Bromsgrove District Plan and Redditch Local Plan.

The SA process has been divided into a number of key stages which follow a logical sequence and are as follows:

- 1) Comparison of Strategic Objectives against SA objectives
- 2) Comparison of Area Assessment Principles against SA objectives
- 3) Sustainability Appraisal of Redditch Growth Broad Area Options
- 4) Sustainability Appraisal of Scenarios for Alternative Growth Locations

Stage 1: Comparison of Strategic Objectives against SA objectives

Each Strategic Objective was assessed against each of the SA objectives and it was then possible to determine which Strategic Objective performed best in terms of sustainability. All the Strategic Objectives would have a positive outcome on development if they were met, as shown by their positive scores, but some are more sustainable than others. Against the SA objectives strategic objective 7 proved to be the most sustainable.

This objective was “to improve the accessibility of people in both Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough to employment opportunities and all other facilities and to reduce their need to travel; together with the promotion of safer and more sustainable travel patterns and integration of communities”. This scored highly due to its balanced nature and ability to address social, economic and environmental factors alike. Whereas Strategic Objective 1 “to provide sufficient homes to meet the housing needs of both Bromsgrove District and Redditch Borough” scored the lowest score (although still positive), due to its limited nature in only addressing some social issues.

Stage 2: Comparison of Area Assessment Principles against SA objectives

Each Area Assessment Principle was assessed against each of the SA objectives to determine which Strategic Objective performed best in terms of sustainability. All of the objectives achieved an overall positive score, due to the constructive nature the principles were designed to have on sustainability. The highest performing Area Assessment Principle was principle 1, which stated “development should be able to address green infrastructure in a comprehensive manner enabling the delivery of a high quality multi-functional green space network”. This was mainly due to the overwhelming impact the principle would have on sustainability objectives regarding the environment compared with other objectives, as well as some social aspects.



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Stage 3: Sustainability Appraisal of Redditch Growth Broad Area Options

In order to better understand the implications of the Redditch Growth options, a Sustainability Appraisal of each of the areas needed to be undertaken. For the clarity an SA has been undertaken on the following areas: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19 and 20. Areas 3a, 7 and 18 have not been assessed for the reasons set out within Chapter 5 of the Housing Growth Development Study.

The outcomes from each of the assessed areas were compared against each other to identify those which perform best. This assessment assisted in the decision making process to determine which of the identified areas around Redditch would deliver the most sustainable form of development for future growth.

Guidance provided by the DCLG states that the SA should aim to improve on the effects of the existing saved plan, and to test this, options such as 'no plan' and 'business as usual' should be explored. In this case, these (in reality unlikely) scenarios have been deemed to constitute the independent progression of both the Bromsgrove District Plan and Redditch Local Plan No. 4 without the element of cross-boundary growth with Redditch Borough thereby proposing 3,400 fewer new homes over the plan period.

There are potentially a number of social, environmental and economic consequences of this approach. It is clear that if growth needs are not met it is unlikely that the Development Plans of either authority will be found sound by an Inspector. Without up-to-date Development Plans it would create a great deal of uncertainty and potentially lead to greater pressures on affordable housing, increased prices for market housing and 'planning by appeal'. It is quite clear that this approach is unlikely to lead to the most sustainable form of development.

The conclusion from assessing each area against the SA objectives indicated that a number of potential development areas would have a negative impact in sustainability terms or just have a neutral effect. These areas (1, 2, 9, 10, 11, 13, 16, 17, 19 and 20) can be discounted without any further consideration. Areas 3, 12, 14 and 15 achieved positive scores in sustainability terms but are not considered further within Chapter 6. This is because in most cases there is a fundamental reason that makes the sites unsuitable for further consideration which cannot be fully expressed within the SA scoring matrix. For example if Area 14 were developed it would lead to coalescence between Redditch and Studley. This is a major issue which cannot be overcome, yet can only achieve a score of -2 when assessed against objective E2 relating to Green Belt.

Areas 12, 14 and 15 performed well primarily due to the close relationship with Studley. However, it is necessary to remember that it is important for the proposed developments to have strong relationships with Redditch Town Centre and other local centres within the Borough of Redditch to ensure that economic gains are maximised. Development of this scale could greatly increase the vitality and viability of range of services and facilities in the town centre if well located. Area 3 did achieve a positive score, although modest in comparison to the best performing sites. Due to the poor access to facilities and public transport and potentially prominent nature of development within the Green Belt it was confirmed that site 3 would not be considered further. A detailed analysis of why Areas 3, 12, 14 and 15 were not considered further is provided within Chapter 5 of the Housing Growth Development Study.

The remaining Areas (4, 5, 6, 8 and the reduced area of 11) were considered to be the most sustainable in social, environmental and economic terms and were therefore considered in more detail within Chapter 6 of the Housing Growth Development Study.



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Stage 4: Sustainability Appraisal of Scenarios for Alternative Growth Locations

In order to achieve the required housing target of 3,400 it was identified that in most instances a combination of areas would be required and therefore scenarios were tested. As the broad and focused area appraisals indicate, Areas 4, 5, 6, 8 and the reduced area 11 were considered further. The following combinations of areas have been tested:

- Areas 4 and 6
- Areas 4 and 5
- Reduced Areas of 4 and 11 plus Areas 5 and 6
- Areas 6 and 8

As all of the most suitable areas were taken to the focused area appraisal stage, all the combined area scenarios also achieved an overall positive score against SA objectives. However, there were still varying differences in performance against each scenario. The combination of Areas 4 and 5 performed poorly in comparison to the other three scenarios, mainly due to biodiversity grounds (E1) and in relation to the historic environment (E4). Overall, the combination of Areas 4 and 6 scored slightly higher than Areas 6 and 8 due to fewer environmental constraints and the potential for greater social benefits. It is considered that the combination of Areas 6 and 8 could have a significant harmful impact on the natural landscape. Site 8 is very visible and therefore development would be visually prominent and harmful to retaining the openness of the Green Belt. Development here would also considerably reduce the gap between Redditch and Alvechurch, as well as the strategic gap with Birmingham. Therefore, as well as achieving the highest scenario score, the combination of Areas 4 and 6 are the most suitable for development in terms of sustainability.

How to comment on this SA Report

If you have any comments on the Housing Growth Sustainability Appraisal of please send them to either Council by post or email at:

● **Bromsgrove District Council
Planning and Regeneration
The Council House
Burcot Lane
Bromsgrove
B60 1AA**

● **Redditch Borough Council
Development Plans
Town Hall
Walter Stranz Square
Redditch
Worcestershire
B98 8AH**

Consultplanning@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

The consultation period will run from **1st April to 15th May 2013** and we would like to hear your views by **15th May 2013**.





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