

## **EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 Development Plan Document – as updated October 2023 Sustainability Appraisal Adoption Statement**

#### **1. Introduction**

1.1 East Cambridgeshire District Council adopted an update to the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan on 19 October 2023. This adoption statement has been prepared in accordance with Regulations 16(3) and (4) of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, which require that a statement be produced on adoption of a plan or programme which sets out the following 'particulars'.

- How environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme;
- How the environmental report has been taken into account;
- How opinions expressed during public consultation have been taken into account;
- The reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in light of other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and
- The measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan or programme.

1.2 The significant environmental effects referred to above have been broadened out to include the appraisal of economic and social sustainability in accordance with S.19 (5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Planning Act 2008, S.180). The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) process also incorporates the requirements of Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in accordance with European Union Directive 2001/42/EC and removes the need to carry out a separate SEA.

1.3 Therefore, for the sake of clarity, a combined SA/SEA of the Local Plan (as proposed to be amended) has been undertaken which satisfies all relevant obligations. Where the Council is required by The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 to produce a statement on 'environmental effects', it has expanded on this in relation to each of the aforementioned 'particulars' to include economic and social considerations/effects as well.

#### **2 Background**

2.1 The Council's SA Report was submitted with the Submission East Cambridgeshire Local Plan DPD to the Secretary of State (SoS) for Communities and Local Government on 19 July 2022. SA has been undertaken alongside the development of the update of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015, and the SA Report was published for consultation at the same time as the Proposed submission draft East Cambridgeshire Single Issue Review Local Plan (May-June 2022) to provide the public and statutory bodies with an opportunity to express their opinions and to use it as a reference point in commenting on the proposed update of East Cambridgeshire Local Plan.



2.2 The existing East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 sets out an overarching vision, strategy, and policies against which development proposals will be assessed to deliver growth for the district up to 2031. The proposed update focussed on the 'single issue' of the housing requirement in the Local Plan, specifically policy Growth1 and some supporting text. The SoS appointed P Lewis BA (Hons) MA MRTPI, an Inspector from the Planning Inspectorate, to conduct an independent public examination into the soundness of the update of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan.

2.3 The Inspector's conclusion, reached in October 2023, is that the update of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan are sound (subject to some main modifications). He specifically considers SA matters in his report under "Assessment of Other Aspects of Legal Compliance" and concludes that "The Plan complies with all other relevant legal requirements, including in the 2004 Act (as amended) and the 2012 Regulations".

### **3 How environmental considerations have been integrated into the Local Plan DPD**

3.1 SA has been carried out at a number of key stages in the preparation of the update of the Local Plan. SA aims to test a plan or programme, and each policy it contains, against sustainability objectives which have been agreed for this purpose. The strategy and policies can then be subjected to further testing (if necessary), altered if desired, or justified if not.

3.2 The SA is undertaken in parallel with development of the plan, so that all reasonable alternatives for achieving the plan's objectives are assessed for their sustainability effects, and stakeholders are given frequent opportunities at each stage to express their views which are also used to guide and inform the appraisal and plan preparation process. In this way, the most sustainable strategy and policies should emerge and be included in the final adopted plan. This is therefore an iterative and inclusive process.

### **4 How the Environmental Report has been taken into account**

4.1 The SA process has contributed to the development and refinement of the update of the Local Plan by providing an independent assessment of the sustainability of the Council's proposed options and policies throughout the plan preparation process. Each SA Report demonstrates how sustainability objectives have been taken into account at each stage, and integrated into the development of the plan.

4.2 This process has facilitated, amongst other things the most appropriate options to be selected at each stage in an open and transparent way.

### **5 How consultation responses have been taken into account**

5.1 Minimum requirements for consultation and public participation are set out in the relevant regulations, especially The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. Each Local Planning Authority (LPA) is required to produce a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) to set out how and at what stages different parts of its community can take part in, and influence, the plan-



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making process, in order to meet, and if possible, exceed, the minimum requirements of the Regulations. Under the provisions of the 2004 Act, the Council is required to prepare a statement setting out the public consultation and participation that has been undertaken throughout the Plan's preparation.

5.2 The Consultation Statement fulfils this requirement in accordance with Regulation 22 (1) (c) of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

5.3 Regulation 22 (1) (c) requires a LPA, when submitting a Plan to the Secretary of State, to also submit a statement setting out, if representations were made in accordance with Regulations 18 and 20 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, the number of representations made, and a summary of the main issues raised in those representations.

5.4 In summary, the documents referred to above provide details on the following:

- How and at what stages different parts of the community can take part in, and influence, the plan-making process;
- A statement setting out the public consultation and participation that has been undertaken throughout the preparation of the update of the Local Plan, including how the representations and main issues raised have been taken into account.
- A statement setting out the number of representations made and a summary of the main issues raised.

## **6 The reasons for choosing the Local Plan as adopted, in the light of other reasonable alternatives dealt with**

6.1 The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (12) (2) requires 'environmental reports' (SA/SEA) to consider any reasonable alternatives, taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme.

6.2 As part of the iterative SA process, the alternative options for the update of the Local Plan were individually tested against the sustainability objectives and consulted upon widely. The results of this were used at each stage in the process to inform the decision on which options should be taken forward as policies and whether any would require amendments or further mitigation measures, ultimately culminating in the adopted updated Local Plan.

6.3 Each SA Report demonstrates how sustainability objectives have been taken into account at each stage, and integrated into the development of the update of the Local Plan.

6.4 The update of the Local Plan (assisted by its supporting documents) has been found sound following examination by an independent Inspector and represents a sustainable approach to key planning issues in the District.

## **7 The measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the update of the Local Plan**



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- 7.1 The Council will continue to routinely monitor housing delivered and future housing supply (these being the focus of the update of the Local Plan), and publish such monitoring information on an annual basis.
- 7.2 Monitoring outcomes will normally be reported on an annual basis for a year which begins on 1 April and ends on 31 March, unless data is not available for such a time period. The key delivery vehicle for reporting the outcome of monitoring the update of the Local Plan, as well as the rest of the unaltered Local Plan, will be the East Cambridgeshire Authorities' Monitoring Report, which will be published annually.

## **8 Further information**

- 8.1 A full copy of the SA Report, the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023) and related documents are available on our website: [www.eastcambs.gov.uk](http://www.eastcambs.gov.uk).