



LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK FOR WIRRAL

CORE STRATEGY LOCAL PLAN

SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL – BASELINE REPORT

DECEMBER 2012

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Introduction

Baseline information provides the basis for predicting and monitoring effects and helps to identify sustainability issues and alternative ways of dealing with them.

In July 2006 Wirral Council published a Sustainability Appraisal Framework as the basis for testing the performance of the Council's emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) policies and proposals. The subsequent Core Strategy Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report in July 2007 included a review of the available baseline data to provide a picture of Wirral prior to the preparation of the LDF. This informed the setting of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Objectives for assessing the Core Strategy DPD, given that the Core Strategy has a Borough-wide focus.

The baseline review is also intended to address the requirements of the SEA Directive to "*identify the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme*" and to identify "*the environmental characteristics of the area likely to be affected*".

This Report provides an update of the original baseline review in the Core Strategy SA Scoping Report and has re-validated the original SA Objectives as a robust basis for the appraisal of the Core Strategy policies prior to publication of a Proposed Submission Draft Core Strategy for public consideration.

The original baseline review in the Core Strategy SA Scoping Report identified a series of indicators for each of the SA Objectives. Wherever possible the same data sources have been used to update the original indicators in the baseline review, however this has not been possible in every instance. Some indicators have been changed to reflect the availability of new or alternative data sources. The information provided for both the original and revised indicators includes current and historic data, where available, to identify trends.

Data Gaps and Limitations

Ideally, all the baseline information would relate to a common timeframe. Unfortunately, this is not the case. The baseline information presented, nevertheless, represents the most up-to-date information that was available during the period of collection. In some cases, time-series data, which would better enable trends to be identified, has not been available.

A number of the original indicators did not have any associated baseline information, as it had not been possible to establish the most appropriate target, figures or data sources. Wherever possible, these shortfalls in data have been addressed in this review, but it is recognised that better data sources may become available in the future. It is important that the choice of indicators is not simply guided by the immediate availability of data. It is, therefore, intended that the baseline review should be treated as "work in

progress” which will be added to and amended as new sources of baseline information are identified at each stage of the appraisal process.

The Local Development Framework for Wirral Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) set out progress on the delivery of the Local Development Scheme and presents the most up-to-date data in relation to many of the indicators included in this report. Future annual monitoring reports will provide the most appropriate source of monitoring data going forward. The Proposed Submission Draft Core Strategy is also accompanied by a Draft Monitoring Plan that once finished will be used to guide the monitoring of the impacts of the adopted Core Strategy on the indicators it identifies.

Review of Plans, Policies, Programmes Strategies and Initiatives

The SEA Directive requires the Environmental Report (in this case the SA Report) to provide information on the relationship of Core Strategy with other relevant plans, policies, programmes, strategies and initiatives (PPPSIs). During the SA scoping stage in 2007, policies, plans and programmes that were considered to influence or affect the Core Strategy were identified. The list of PPPSIs was reviewed in full at the Spatial Options and Preferred Options stage of the Core Strategy and has been reviewed and updated again for the Submission Core Strategy SA: a summary list of current relevant PPPSIs is now presented in Section 5 of the Proposed Submission Draft Core Strategy SA report, while the full review of relevant Plans, Policies, Programmes, Strategies and Initiatives and their implications for the SA and Core Strategy is presented in section 6 of this document.