

# **Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031**

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Adoption Statement

**May 2019**

## Introduction

This Adoption Statement for the Sustainability Appraisal (incorporating strategic environmental assessment) of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031 has been prepared in accordance with the following requirements:

Regulation 26 of the Town & Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended)  
Regulation 16 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans & Programmes Regulations 2004

In accordance with European and national legislation, development plans must be subject to the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) processes.

A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) aims to predict and assess the economic, social and environmental effects that are likely to arise from implementing development plans. It is a process for understanding whether policies, strategies or plans promote sustainable development, and for improving them to deliver more sustainable outcomes.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) aims to predict and assess the environmental effects that are likely to arise from plans, policies and strategies, such as a Core Strategy. It is a process for assessing and mitigating the negative environmental impacts of specific plans and programmes. For the purposes of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan, the SEA process was incorporated into the SA process.

For the purpose of this Adoption Statement, the integrated appraisal will be referred to as the Sustainability Appraisal (SA).

Regulation 16 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (from hereon in referred to as the SEA Regulations) sets out the requirements with regard to the post adoption procedures of the SA/SEA. This statement has been prepared in accordance with this regulation. In accordance with the SEA Regulations, this statement sets out the following:

- a) how environmental considerations have been integrated into the Plan;
- b) how the environmental report has been taken into account;
- c) how opinions expressed in response to public consultation have been taken into account;
- d) How consultation entered into under Reg 14(4) has been taken into account
- e) the reasons for choosing the plan as adopted, in light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and
- f) the measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the Plan

Stevenage Borough Council adopted the Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031 (“The Plan”) on 22 May 2019. The plan covers the whole of Stevenage Borough.

The Plan includes strategic policies, which set out our overall approach to topics such as housing, employment and Green Belt, and sets key targets that the plan will meet. These are the policies any neighbourhood plans would need to follow. It also includes detailed policies, which set out the detailed requirements we will apply to individual planning applications to make sure the Local Plan vision and strategic policies can be achieved.

The Stevenage Borough Local Plan has been produced in line with the requirements of the Town & Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended). The key stages of Local Plan production are set out below:

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Dates</b>
Initial consultation	June - July 2013
Housing numbers consultation	June - July 2015
Regulation 19 consultation	Jan - Feb 2016
Submission	21 July 2016
Examination hearing sessions	Feb – March 2017
Inspectors report received	18 Oct 2017
Local Plan adoption	22 May 2019

- a) **How environmental considerations have been integrated into the Plan and;**
- b) **How the environmental report has been taken into account**

The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan has been an iterative process undertaken throughout its production, informing each stage, as appropriate.

An initial SA Scoping Report was published for consultation with statutory stakeholders in February and March 2012. This provided a summary of the current environmental, social and economic conditions in Stevenage. This baseline information of the Scoping Report assisted in the development of the Sustainability Appraisal Framework. Responses from the consultation were taken into account and indicators were updated to develop the final version Scoping Report.

At each stage of plan production, SA was carried out. The following appraisals were published alongside the Local Plan during each consultation: June 2013, June 2015, Jan 2016, July 2016. The findings of these appraisals were used to inform the next stage of plan production.

During the Public Examination, a number of main modifications to the Stevenage Borough Local Plan were proposed by the Inspector. A further addendum to the SA was subsequently produced (in May 2017), to assess whether any of these main modifications were likely to have significant effects on sustainability.

The Inspector’s Report notes the following:

*"Following the examination hearings, the Council prepared a schedule of proposed MMs and carried out sustainability appraisal of them. The MM schedule was subject to public consultation for six weeks. I have taken account of the consultation responses in coming to my conclusions in this report and in this light I have made some amendments to the detailed wording of the main modifications. None of the amendments significantly alter the content of the modifications as published for consultation or undermines the participatory processes and sustainability appraisal that has been undertaken. Where necessary I have highlighted these amendments in the report."*

The Inspector's Report (para 190), in its overall assessment of legal compliance, concludes "SA has been carried out and is adequate".

Full details of how the findings of each of the SA reports were taken into account can be found in the reports, which are available on our website.

**c) How opinions expressed as a result of consultation have been taken into account**

Consultation on the SA reports was undertaken in line with Regulation 13 of the SEA Regulations. Each SA was consulted on in parallel with the consultation on the development of policies in the Stevenage Borough Local Plan and using the same methods of consultation, as set out in the Regulation 22 Statement.

Throughout the SA process the key environmental bodies, such as Environment Agency, Natural England and English Heritage have been consulted and their views taken into account.

At each stage, the consultation responses were carefully considered, and amendments made during the next stage of plan production, where appropriate.

**d) How consultation entered into under Reg 14(4) (transboundary consultation) has been taken into account**

No transboundary consultation with other Member States was deemed necessary for the development of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan.

**e) Reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with**

The SA (July 2016) has adequately and accurately assessed the likely environmental, social and economic effects of the Plan. Para 1.7 – 1.18 of the SA details how this has been achieved.

The SA tests the Stevenage Borough Local Plan against all reasonable alternatives. Para 1.51 of the SA details the criteria against which reasonable alternatives were assessed.

Chapter 9 of this SA details how the issues and options (reasonable alternatives) identified at each stage of plan production were assessed, and can be referred to for further information.

**f) Measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan or programme**

The Stevenage Borough Local Plan will be subject to a comprehensive monitoring process, as detailed in Chapter 15 of the Plan. An Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) will be produced at the end of each financial year (31 March) and will be made available on our website. This will set out the significant effects of the plan, including its environmental impacts.

There is also a statutory requirement to review Local Plans every 5 years. This monitoring data will be key in determining how the plan is working, whether the targets are being met, and what changes might be required for future plans.

Chapter 15 sets out how each of the Plan's policies will be monitored.