



Fylde Local Plan to 2032: Publication Version

Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal

Non-Technical Summary of the SA Report

Fylde Council

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Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal

SA Report

Author	Scott Johnson	
Checker	David Hourd	
Approver	David Hourd	
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1 Introduction and Background

Fylde Council is currently consulting on the Fylde Local Plan to 2032 – Publication Version. This follows earlier consultation on the Preferred Option in 2013 and Revised Preferred Option in 2015. Once adopted, the plan will replace the existing Fylde Borough Local Plan, which was adopted in October 2005.

The Local Plan is the most important planning document that Fylde Council will produce and will form the main consideration when determining planning applications. It will establish the planning framework for the borough's administrative area, setting out where new homes, employment and shops will be located as well as which areas will be enhanced and those that will be conserved.

When preparing the Local Plan, it is a legal requirement to undertake a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) to ensure that it is developed within the principles of sustainable development.

Independent consultants, Arcadis Consulting (UK) Ltd., have undertaken the SA of the Fylde Local Plan Publication Version Document.

This report provides a high-level summary of the findings of the SA. The detailed report can be viewed at the council offices or on the website.

2 Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal

SA is a process for assessing the social, economic and environmental impacts of a plan as it develops and it aims to ensure that sustainable development is at the heart of the plan-making process. It is a legal requirement under planning law. The law states that the SA must comply with requirements of the UK's Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations.

Good practice guidance proposes a number of prescribed stages in the SA process, each of which links with stages of the plan-making process. It is important that the SA is able to feed into the plan-making process. This involves the ongoing appraisal of the plan and makes recommendations to help steer its direction to avoid potentially adverse consequences. This is particularly important when considering alternative strategy options. Consultation with statutory bodies (Natural England, Historic England and Environment Agency) and the public is also required at key stages.

3 Scope of the Appraisal

The scope of the SA was determined through collecting information on the environmental, social and economic characteristics of the borough. This enabled key issues, opportunities and trends to be identified. A review of other relevant environmental protection objectives and policies was also undertaken. The review of these documents focused upon identifying key environmental and sustainability objectives that would need to be considered in the SA and the Local Plan.

The scope of the appraisal was documented in a Scoping Report, issued for consultation with the statutory bodies in 2006 and then again in 2011 and 2015 (following updates).

Key Sustainability Issues and Opportunities

To ensure that a robust assessment of the emerging Local Plan is undertaken, it is necessary to understand the existing conditions and characteristics of the borough, for example, population dynamics, levels of deprivation, health, employment patterns and the condition of housing stock and its affordability. These are detailed in the SA Report. The lists below identifies the

sustainability topics covered in the SA. Details of the identified issues and opportunities are provided in the SA Report.

- Population: demographics and implications for service provision and housing.
- Education and qualifications: levels of attainment and implications of development on school places; gap between skills and suitable job availability.
- Human health: potential implications of opportunities for health improvements for quality of life and the economy.
- Water: river water quality; drainage; wastewater capacity; flood risk; aquifer protection; bathing water quality; and water efficiency/water sensitive design.
- Soil and land quality: levels of brownfield land re-use over greenfield land.
- Air quality: existing air quality and opportunities to reduce travel distances.
- Climatic factors and energy: energy efficiency; flood risk; sustainable design; renewable/low carbon energy and consideration for other topic areas in association with this; sustainable travel modes; and natural environment adaptation.
- Biodiversity: threats to the high quality environment of the borough from development; internationally, nationally and locally designated sites; green and blue infrastructure potential and risks; and public access to open spaces.
- Cultural Heritage: cultural heritage resource of the borough and consideration of the wider historic landscape including non-designated heritage and archaeological resources; tourism potential and flood risk threat.
- Landscape: landscape and townscape distinctiveness and benefit for quality of life; potential coalescence of settlements; impact of development on the edge of settlements and impact of highways schemes.
- Minerals and waste: strategic landfill sites and their implications; environmental issues of sand extraction; recycling and composting rates; fly-tipping; sustainable waste management opportunities; and shale gas potential.
- Transportation: level of car dependency and car ownership rates; modal shift potential; congestion at motorway junctions; new road schemes proposed; rail service quality, frequency and connectivity; public transport provision in rural areas; accessibility of employment sites; Blackpool Airport; and the use of technology to reduce the need to travel.
- Economy: need to diversify the employment base; provision of highly skilled employment for skills retention; image of the borough to inward investors; rural employment threats; levels of in-commuting; enterprise zones; opportunities in the tourism industry; and improvement to broadband capacity and speeds.
- Deprivation: crime rates and antisocial behaviour in urban areas; pockets of deprivation in urban wards; need for improved accessibility to services and amenities in rural areas; and scope for involvement of local communities in neighbourhood planning.
- Housing: demand and population increases/in-migration; increase in house prices and affordability levels; housing need for families and the elderly and a conflict of land availability with areas of need; homelessness levels; gypsy and traveller accommodation needs; housing completion levels; and sustainable design and accessibility.

Individual components of the Local Plan have been assessed to determine their sustainability performance and to provide recommendations for sustainability improvements. The following elements have been assessed:

- The Local Plan's Vision;
- The Local Plan's Strategic Objectives;

- The Local Plan's Development Strategy (and alternative options);
- The Local Plan's Strategic and Non-Strategic Locations for Development; and
- The Local Plan's Development Management Policies.

The SA process is iterative, with regular feedback occurring between the plan-makers and the SA team as plan options and policies are developed.

3.1 SA Framework for Assessment

The SA Framework underpins the assessment methodology and comprises a series of SA Objectives (covering social, economic and environmental issues) that are used to test the performance of the plan being assessed. The SA Objectives have been developed using the review of other relevant plans, programmes and environmental objectives, the baseline data and the key issue and opportunities. The SA Framework was amended following receipt of the Scoping Report consultation responses from statutory consultees in 2012 and 2015. The following Objectives form the basis of the SA Framework. These are supported by a series of guide questions, indicators and targets, which can be found in the SA Report (Table 3-3):

1. Reduce crime, disorder and fear of crime
2. Improve levels of educational attainment and encourage lifelong learning
3. Improve physical and mental health for all and reduce health inequalities
4. Ensure that housing provision meets all needs
5. Protect and enhance community spirit and cohesion
6. Improve sustainable access to basic goods, services and amenities for all groups
7. Encourage sustainable economic growth and business development
8. Promote economic inclusion
9. Deliver urban renaissance
10. Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity
11. Protect and enhance landscape character and quality, and protect tranquillity
12. Conserve and enhance the historic environment, heritage assets and their setting
13. Protect and enhance the quality of the water environment and reduce the risk of flooding
14. Limit and adapt to the impacts of climate change
15. Protect and improve air quality
16. Ensure the sustainable use of natural resources

4 Developing and Refining Options and Assessing Effects

3.2 Alternatives

Government guidance advises that only realistic and relevant alternatives should be considered and they should be sufficiently distinct to enable a meaningful comparison of their different environmental effects.

Good practice guidance recommends that the key aims and principles of the plan should be assessed against the SA Objectives, in order to test their compatibility and to determine whether they accord with broad sustainability principles. The Vision for Fylde has been reviewed against the SA Objectives, and a summary of the key strengths, weaknesses and recommendations are presented in Chapter 5 of the SA Report. The assessment of the Strategic Objectives of the Local Plan against the SA Objectives was been undertaken during the SA of the 2013 Preferred Option, using a simple matrix based approach. Chapter 5 of the SA Report presents the complete compatibility of the Spatial Objectives against the SA Objectives. The Local Plan Publication Version (2016) includes revised Objectives. These have been reviewed in Chapter 5 as part of this iteration of the SA.

The SA Report presents a summary of the findings of the Plan Options that were previously assessed in 2012 and 2013, as well as site alternatives assessed in 2016. In 2012, five alternative spatial strategy options were proposed in the *Fylde Local Plan to 2030 Issues and Options* paper. The options are listed below with further details provided in Appendix D of the SA Report.

- Option 1: Focus on Lytham and St Annes
- Option 2: Equal focus on Lytham and St Annes and Kirkham
- Option 3: Lytham and St Annes and Key Local Service Centres
- Option 4: Lytham and St Annes and rural dispersal
- Option 5: Equal focus on Lytham and St Annes and land on the SE edge of Blackpool

In addition to assessing the performance of the five strategy options and the Business as Usual scenario, a series of Policy options were developed by the Council that were also assessed through the SA. The results of the assessment of the policies were documented in the Interim SA Report (2012) and the information used by the Council to develop the preferred Policy wording. Alternatives sites for potential allocation were also assessed, which is discussed in Chapter 4 of the SA Report and provided in Appendices J and K.

3.3 Appraisal of Local Plan Policies and Strategic Locations for Development

The Local Plan policies and the strategic locations for development were assessed against the SA Objectives using a matrix-based approach. This matrix allowed the identification of positive and negative impacts, as well as the potential for cumulative effects to occur as a result of the development of multiple sites in a specific location of the borough. Mitigation measures and recommendations were suggested to offset or alleviate any predicted adverse impacts, or to enhance any opportunities that were identified.

A summary of the assessment of this is provided in Chapter 6 of the SA Report. The complete results of the assessment are presented in Appendix F (2013 Preferred Option Assessments) and Appendix H (2016 Publication Version Assessments) of the SA Report.

In summary, the majority of predicted effects were positive. The assessment led to the prediction of major positive effects against all of SA Objectives, particularly SA Objective 7: Encourage sustainable economic growth and business development. No major negative effects have been predicted.

3.4 Appraisal of Non-Strategic Sites

The Non-Strategic Sites were assessed against a revised SA Framework, using a matrix-based approach. The SA Framework was revised for the assessment of the strategic sites, to enable the Objectives and Guide Questions to be specifically focused on site-specific aspects, to avoid repetition in the assessment. Further information on how the SA Framework was modified for the appraisal of the non-strategic sites can be found in Chapter 7 and Appendix I of the SA Report.

The assessment of the non-strategic sites identifies the positive and negative impacts predicted and includes mitigation measures to address any predicted adverse impacts wherever possible. A summary of the assessment, together with the assessment notations used in the assessment and their definition (i.e. how a positive score was assigned) are presented in Chapter 7 and Appendix I.

The potential for cumulative, synergistic or secondary or indirect effects as a result of the Local Plan has been inherently considered within the appraisal, the findings of which are presented in Chapter 8.

In general, positive effects were predicted against criteria relating to the following SA Objectives:

- 10: Protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity;
- 11: Protect and enhance landscape character and quality, and protect tranquillity;
- 12: Conserve and enhance the historic environment, heritage assets and their setting;
- 13: Protect and enhance the quality of the water environment and reduce the risk of flooding; and
- 16: Ensure the sustainable use of natural resources.

Negative effects were predicted against the following SA Objectives:

- 6: Improve sustainable access to basic goods, services and amenities for all groups (improvement in levels of deprivation levels through site allocations)

Mitigation

Where appropriate, mitigation measures have been recommended to avoid, reduce or offset the potential adverse impacts as a result of the Local Plan. In addition, potential opportunities to benefit and enhance the social, economic and environmental receptors have been identified.

As the Local Plan has been developed in parallel to the SA process, mitigation measures have been incorporated on a continual basis into the Local Plan.

3.5 Cumulative Effects

The cumulative effects of the Local Plan are considered in the SA Report, Chapter 8. Table 8-1 provides a summary of the predicted cumulative effects of the Plan. Cumulative or Synergistic effects can be summarised as follows:

- Levels of educational and skills attainment have the potential to improve in the long term due to raised aspirations although school capacity will be put under pressure.
- Levels of health and well-being have the potential to improve in the long term.
- Improvements to community spirit and cohesion, improve the vitality and vibrancy of

settlements and reduce economic exclusion.

- Protection and enhancement of landscape and townscape through regeneration of town centres, brownfield sites and minimisation of greenfield land-take. However, some greenfield loss at edges of settlements may cause negative effects.
- Whilst no heritage assets would be directly affected by the Local Plan, there is potential for unknown archaeology to be affected.
- Potential negative effects of traffic growth.
- Potential negative and positive contributions towards climate change.
- Potential positive effects as a result of promotion of sustainable travel.

The cumulative effect of the Local Plan with other plans and projects has also been considered. The potential plans and projects which may have cumulative effects are listed in Table 8-2 in the SA Report. Effects can be summarised as follows:

- Crime and fear of crime may reduce along the Fylde-Blackpool periphery in response to wider regeneration initiatives in addition to the Local Plan provisions.
- Levels of educational and skills attainment have the potential to improve in the long term due to raised aspirations although school capacity will be put under pressure.
- Levels of health and well-being have the potential to improve in the long term.
- Housing will be provided to meet local needs and would contribute to sub-regional targets.
- Access to services and facilities for local people and visitors would be improved.
- The Local Plan would help facilitate employment creation, business development and economic growth.
- Promotion of employment in areas of high employment / income deprivation.
- Potential negative impacts on biodiversity could occur as a result of development within some brownfield / Greenfield sites.
- Protection and enhancement of landscape and townscape through regeneration of town centres, brownfield sites and minimisation of greenfield land-take. However, some greenfield loss at edges of settlements may cause negative effects.
- Whilst no heritage assets would be directly affected by the Local Plan, there is potential for unknown archaeology to be affected.
- Potential negative effects of traffic growth.
- Potential negative and positive contributions towards climate change.
- Potential positive effects as a result of promotion of sustainable travel.
- The prudent use of natural resources.

3.6 Monitoring

A monitoring framework has been developed to measure the performance of the plan against changes in defined indicators that are linked to its implementation. This has been designed to focus mainly on significant sustainability effects including those:

- That indicate a likely breach of international, national or local legislation, recognised guidelines or standards.
- That may give rise to irreversible damage, with a view to identifying trends before such damage is caused.
- Where there was uncertainty in the SA, and where monitoring would enable preventative or mitigation measures to be taken.

As well as measuring specific indicators linked to the implementation of the plan, contextual monitoring of social, environmental and economic change has been included i.e. a regular review of baseline conditions in the borough. This enables the measurement of the overall effects of the plan. The impacts predicted in the SA will not be realised until development occurs. The monitoring framework presented in Table 9-1 can then be updated to include

targets as and when they are developed.

3.7 Next Steps

This SA Report will now be issued for consultation alongside the Publication Version of the Local Plan to all key stakeholders (including statutory consultees and the public) for comment. Following the close of the consultation period, Fylde Council will review the feedback and revise the plan as appropriate for Submission to the Secretary of State.

If you would like to comment on the SA, please contact:

Planning Policy
Fylde Council
Town hall
Lytham and St Annes Lancashire
FY8 1LW
Tel: 01253 658418

Email: planningpolicy@fylde.gov.uk

Website: <http://www.fylde.gov.uk/council/planning-policy--local-plan/>