

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**ENVIRONMENT
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

TUESDAY 17 JUNE 2003 AT 10.00 A.M.

SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL OF THE STRUCTURE PLAN

Report of the Director of Environment

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Executive Member: Derrick Ashley

1. Purpose of report

1.1 As requested by Councillor B A York, to consider whether the Sustainability Appraisal of the Structure Plan should be the subject of scrutiny.

2. Summary

2.1 Councillor York has submitted a request that the Stage 2 Sustainability Appraisal of the Structure Plan Alterations should be subject to scrutiny.

2.2 The Sustainability Appraisal was considered by the Structure Plan Panel at its meeting on 28 January, and was available as a document on the County Council's Web Site and in Member Rooms, prior to the consideration of the Structure Plan Alterations by Full Council on 13 February.

2.3 Formal consultation on the deposit Structure Plan Alterations finished on 16 April. As part of the consultation, the Sustainability Appraisal was made available at deposit points as a background document.

2.4 As agreed by Cabinet on 19 May and Full Council on 20 May, whilst the Structure Plan Examination in Public has been postponed, the Structure Plan Panel will be considering the deposit consultation responses received in the coming months, including comments received on the Sustainability Appraisal.

3. Conclusion

3.1 Having considered the information in this report. The Committee will need to decide how further scrutiny of this issue should be undertaken.

4. Background

- 4.1 Councillor York has submitted a request for the Sustainability Appraisal of the Structure Plan Alterations to be the subject of scrutiny. In making this request, Councillor York outlined the possible remit and format of such a scrutiny as being :

“To scrutinise the Sustainability Appraisal Report Stage 2 in order to consider in depth the significance and value of the Report in assessing the sustainability of the Policies of the Structure Plan Alterations, now taken forward to deposit. In particular to examine in depth the Report’s findings on the main housing development strategy. Neither the Structure Plan Panel nor the County Council had time to scrutinise the Report in depth. A topic group may be appropriate to undertake the scrutiny. Perhaps members who served on the Cabinet Structure Plan Panel should be excluded, so that a fresh examination can be given.”

- 4.2 The Stage 2 Sustainability Appraisal was considered by the Structure Plan Panel at its meeting of 28 January. A covering report set out the purpose of sustainability appraisal and explained that this was Stage 2 of the Appraisal of the emerging Structure plan. In addition the report explained that the appraisal at this stage was in two parts. The first part dealt with the development strategy options, and the second with an appraisal of the emerging policies of the Structure Plan Alterations. The Panel considered the Appraisal itself, before moving on to consider the proposed policies relating to the development strategy and all the other policies of the Plan . The Appraisal was therefore available to be used in the more detailed discussion of the individual policies.
- 4.3 The Appraisal together with other Background Documents was made available in the Members’ Room and Group rooms before the meeting of County Council to consider the deposit Structure Plan Alterations. The Appraisal document was also available on Herts Direct as part of the Structure Plan Panel Agenda papers for 28 January.
- 4.4 Following County Council on 13 February, the Structure Plan Alterations were placed on deposit from Wednesday 5 March 2003 for a six week period. As part of the consultation, copies of the Stage 2 Sustainability Appraisal were made available.
- 4.5 In response to the deposit consultation, Members will be aware that a letter was received from the Government Office for the East of England (Go-East), suggesting that the programme for the Structure Plan process should be reconsidered. This letter was considered by Cabinet on 19 May and Full Council on 20 May. At these meetings it was agreed that in the light of the letter, the Examination in Public into the Structure Plan should be postponed. However, it was also agreed that work should still continue on the Structure Plan, whilst progress on Regional Planning Guidance Note 14 was monitored.
- 4.6 It was also agreed that the merged Structure Plan and Regional Planning Issues Panels should consider the responses made during the deposit period as well as receiving updates on monitoring and background technical papers.

4.7 This merged Panel is due to meet on 11 June, at which stage a work programme will be discussed for considering Structure Plan matters, including the consultation responses.

4.8 Given these circumstances, it is suggested that should further scrutiny of this item be progressed, the timetable for any work should allow for the wider consultation responses on the appraisal to be available before any conclusions are reached.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

6. Rural Implications

6.1 The Sustainability Appraisal of the Structure Plan covers both the overall development strategy and an assessment of individual policies. It therefore has a bearing on rural issues, but only to the same extent as other topics covered by the Structure Plan.

Background papers used by the author when preparing this report

Stage 2 Sustainability Appraisal of Structure Plan Alterations – Baker Associates

Structure Plan Panel papers 28 January 2003 – Item 3 – Sustainability Appraisal of the Pre Deposit Plan

Go-East letter re deposit Structure Plan dated 16 April 2003