



Tewkesbury Borough Plan (TBP) 2011-2031

SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL (SA)
(integrating Strategic Environmental Assessment,
Health Impact Assessment, Equality Impact
Assessment, Habitats Regulations Assessment)

SA ADOPTION STATEMENT
June 2022

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This SA Adoption Statement

- 1 Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is a systematic process that must be carried out during the preparation of a Local Plan relating to development – as set out in Section 19 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and in paragraph 32 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF¹, revised 2021).
- 2 SA incorporates the requirements for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) implemented in the UK through the SEA Regulations (2004)². SEA seeks to provide a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to promoting sustainable development by integrating environmental considerations into the process of preparing certain plans and programmes.
- 3 In addition, the Council chose to integrate the Health Impact Assessment (HIA) and Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) processes within the overarching SA/SEA process. HIA is not a statutory requirement for Councils; however, health considerations are a requirement of the SEA process and thus the overall SA process. Public bodies have a duty³ to assess the impact of their policies on different population groups to ensure that discrimination does not take place and where possible, to promote equality of opportunity. The SA, SEA, HIA and EqIA therefore all form part of the integrated Sustainability Appraisal (SA) process for the Tewkesbury Borough Plan TBP).
- 4 The Council is also required to undertake a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the TBP. The HRA process has its own legislative drivers and requirements⁴. Whilst the different processes can inform each other, it is important that the HRA remains distinguishable from the wider SA process. The HRA process has been undertaken in parallel to the SA and its findings have informed the SA, but the details have been reported separately.
- 5 The SA process comprises a number of stages that are designed to comply with the requirements of the SEA Regulations and as guided through Government Planning Practice⁵. This SA Adoption Statement satisfies the SA/SEA requirements for post adoption (Stage E) and demonstrates compliance with the requirements of the SEA Regulations as follows:

(a) how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme;

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

² <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2004/1633/contents/made>

³ Equality Act, 2010

⁴ Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017)

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal>

- (b) *how the environmental report has been taken into account;*
 - (c) *how opinions expressed in response to— (i) the invitation referred to in regulation 13(2)(d); (ii) action taken by the responsible authority in accordance with regulation 13(4), have been taken into account;*
 - (d) *how the results of any consultations entered into under regulation 14(4) have been taken into account;*
 - (e) *the reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the 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 or programme.*
- 6 SA should demonstrate how the plan has addressed relevant economic, social, and environmental objectives (including opportunities for net gains). Significant adverse impacts on these objectives should be avoided and, wherever possible, alternative options which reduce or eliminate such impacts should be pursued.

Development of the Tewkesbury Borough Plan 2031

- 7 The Tewkesbury Borough Council has prepared a new Local Plan in consideration of the revised NPPF, changed local circumstances, and the progress of the Gloucester, Cheltenham & Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy (GCT JCS, adopted December 2017)⁶. The GCT JCS (2011-2031) sets out the housing and employment needs for the Tewkesbury Borough area including the strategic direction for development growth with Policies (Strategic, Core, Allocation, and Delivery). The Tewkesbury Borough Plan (TBP), covering the administrative area of Tewkesbury Borough, will guide development in the local area and will be used in combination with the JCS.
- 8 The GCT JCS through Strategic Policy SP1 Need for Development sets out the requirement for approximately 35,175 new homes and land to support approximately 39,500 new jobs. This is to be delivered by development within existing urban areas through district plans, existing commitments, urban extensions to Cheltenham and Gloucester, and the provision of Strategic Allocations at Ashchurch. The housing requirement for the Tewkesbury Borough Council area is for at least 9,899 new homes.
- 9 The Tewkesbury Borough Plan presents an overall Vision, as follows:

“Tewkesbury borough, a place where a good quality of life is open to all, where our environment and heritage assets are cherished, a sufficient supply of homes is available and where a thriving economy supports healthy and happy communities.”

⁶ <https://www.jointcorestrategy.org/adopted-joint-core-strategy>

This will be achieved by ensuring that development is directed away from land at risk of flooding and high quality landscapes/heritage assets and towards locations where the mix of land uses and proximity to existing facilities minimises travel distances and maximises transport choice.

- 10 The scale and distribution of new development is directed by JCS Policies SP1-2 and detailed through Local Policies RES1-14, GTTS1, and EMP1-6. JCS Policies are supported through Local Policies to reflect the Tewkesbury area characteristics and provide local guidance on economy and tourism, Green Belt, town centres and retail, quality places, the natural environment, communities, health & recreation, transport & accessibility.
- 11 The TBP allocates 14 local (non-strategic) sites for new housing through Local Policy RES1. Policies RES2-RES14 set out guidance for specific types of housing, including settlement boundaries, rural exception, reuse of rural buildings, sub-division, replacement, alteration, affordable housing, mix, and specialist accommodation for older people. Policy GTTS1 Gypsies and Travellers sets out three locations for pitches at Minsterworth, Staverton, and Badgeworth. Employment development is supported through 3 major local sites at Bishops Cleeve and Churchdown/Staverton and allocated in Local Policy EMP1. Rural Business Centres are allocated in Local Policy EMP2 with seven sites in Bishops Cleeve, Deerhurst, Gretton, Highnam, Twyning and Winchcombe.
- 12 Considerable work and consultation have been undertaken since early preparation in 2013 to develop the Local Plan. Various studies were undertaken to provide the evidence⁷ base to inform decision-making, including housing, retail, and employment needs; viability; transport; flood risk assessments; landscape assessments; Green Belt review; social, sports & open space; and heritage impact assessments. Systematic assessments of potential site options for possible allocation were also undertaken.
- 13 The proposed draft Tewkesbury Borough Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination by a planning inspector on 18 May 2020. Hearing sessions were held virtually via Zoom between 16-18 & 23-25 February and 9-11 & 16-18 March 2021. The Inspector advised in his Post Hearings Letter (16 June 2021) that he considered the Tewkesbury Borough Plan to be a Plan that could be found sound subject to Main Modifications (MMs). Following additional work by the Council, the proposed MMs to the TBP were published for public consultation between 1 November 2021 and 4 January 2022. The Inspector in his final report (12 April 2022) concluded that with the recommended main modifications, the Tewkesbury Borough Plan satisfies the requirements of Section 20(5) of the 2004 Act and meets the criteria for soundness in the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 14 In accordance with the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement (SCI), at each stage of the development of the Local Plan, formal and public consultation was undertaken to help ensure that stakeholders' views were taken into consideration in the next steps of plan preparation. Issues raised, and responses prepared have been documented

⁷ <https://www.tewkesbury.gov.uk/tewkesbury-borough-plan-examination-library>

during the development of the Local Plan and published on the Council's website⁸.

How environmental and sustainability considerations have been integrated into the Local Plan; How the Sustainability/Environmental Report has been taken into account

- 15 During the plan-making process, SA (incorporating SEA) has been carried out as an iterative and ongoing process to inform decision making for the developing Local Plan. The SA was undertaken in accordance with government guidance⁹ which encourages a staged approach that integrates appraisals to consider the effects of the emerging plan on socio-economic as well as environmental factors. Since 2013, independent specialist consultants were appointed to carry out the SA for the Council. They worked closely with the plan-making team in an iterative way such that the findings and recommendations from the SA were integrated into each developing stage of the Local Plan.
- 16 The SA of the Local Plan built upon the assessments carried out for the GCT JCS to ensure compatibility and continuity of assessments with more locally specific thresholds and criteria relevant to the Tewkesbury area incorporated into the assessment for the TBP. The SA used the same SA Framework developed during the SA scoping process (May 2014) as the basis for assessing the emerging TBP - and as explained in Section 2 of the submitted SA Report (July 2019). Relevant plans/programmes had been reviewed; baseline information regarding the character of the area and its likely evolution collated and analysed; and sustainability problems, issues and opportunities had been identified during the SA scoping to compile a Framework of Objectives and Sub-Objectives/Decision-Aiding Questions that seek to resolve the sustainability issues identified and relevant to the plan and the Tewkesbury Borough Council area. The assessment used both quantitative and qualitative assessments, including defined thresholds of significance, where possible.
- 17 The SA considered the likely significant effects of the implementation of the Local Plan on the sustainability objectives for the Tewkesbury Borough Council area. For each aspect of the TBP, the assessment against the SA Objectives was recorded with a narrative provided describing any significant effects identified, mitigation of any significant negative effects, and any suggestions for enhancing potential beneficial effects. In line with requirements of the SEA Regulations, the appraisal considered effects including short, medium and long term, permanent, and temporary, positive and negative, secondary, cumulative and synergistic, wherever possible and relevant. Any gaps or difficulties were also reported. The SA was informed by best available

⁸ <https://www.tewkesbury.gov.uk/local-plan#tewkesbury-borough-plan>

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal>

information and data to deal with the effects of the policies of the TBP as a whole.

- 18 There is limited possibility for investigating strategic options through the Tewkesbury Borough Plan. The GCT JCS sets out the overarching strategy for growth and identifies a settlement hierarchy as the basis for the strategy for delivering growth targets, and the development of this strategic approach was tested through SA. For the TBP, potential site allocation options were investigated, tested through SA, and were presented in the SA Reports that accompanied the Initial Regulation 18 consultation (January 2015) and the revised Regulation 18 consultation Preferred Options Plan (August 2018). In this way, relevant alternatives have been tested through the SA process in an iterative and ongoing way to inform plan-making. The SA reported outline reasons for progressing or rejecting potential options for allocation. The findings and recommendations of the SA informed plan-making and were integrated into the development of the Local Plan - and as set out in the Submitted SA Report (July 2019).
- 19 Overall, the SA found that the Tewkesbury Borough Plan is likely to have positive effects for SA objectives on housing, employment/economy, and communities. The selection and location/capacity of the site allocations, together with site-specific requirements where necessary - provide relevant mitigation measures to reduce potential negative effects and confirm possible positive effects. Provision of land for housing and employment will contribute to SA objectives for communities/population and health. Other policies guide development for achieving positive results for local communities, include access to open space and recreational facilities, creating safe and well-designed developments, and preventing negative effects from noise, air, and water pollution.
- 20 There is the potential for significant negative effects on transport, landscape/townscape, water management, protected and local biodiversity, and the historic environment. However, mitigation measures are provided through local policies and the specific location of site allocations selected to minimise negative effects. The SA made suggestions and recommendations for reducing uncertainty and potential negative effects, for example, with site-specific requirements for development proposals. In particular, the findings of the SA informed the selection of potential site allocations by avoiding locations that might have significant negative effects, for example, on nationally protected biodiversity and heritage assets, or those with limited accessibility to community services, and by encouraging sites that enabled more sustainable transport and provision of/access to green infrastructure.
- 21 The Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) screening found that the Tewkesbury Borough Plan is unlikely to have negative effects on protected characteristics or persons identified under the Equality Act 2010 and as a result a full EqIA will not be required. The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) found that the TBP is considered unlikely to have significant effects on any European sites, alone or in-combination with other plans and projects. However, it was noted that the JCS authorities and other local planning authorities, together with the Environment Agency and Natural England would continue to work to address

the issue of increased recreational pressures on the Cotswold Beechwoods SAC and the Severn Estuary SAC/SPA/Ramsar.

- 22 Following submissions to the examination and discussions at the hearings, proposed Main Modifications (MMs) to the TBP were prepared and subject to SA. Many amendments are for updating and to provide further clarity and as such are not significant for SA and HRA. Many of the MMs were refinements that strengthened policies, including site-specific requirements for flood risk management and ecological enhancement, thus confirming certainty of implementation of such mitigation measures, and reaffirming previous SA findings for reducing negative effects to neutral/not significant. Other MMs reflected updating of site allocations, for example where planning permissions have now been received and where site allocations have been removed due to concerns over impacts on Green Belt or the historic environment. Policies on landscape and water management were particularly strengthened.
- 23 These matters were explained and assessed in the SA Addendum Report (September 2021) accompanying the proposed Main Modifications to the Local Plan. Those MMs identified as potentially significant for SA/SEA were then appraised using the same methods and assessors as for the submitted SA Report. Overall, it was found that the previous findings of the SA/SEA remain relevant and valid. The refinements strengthen the mitigation measures embedded in the policies and thus confirm that there will be no significant negative effects and that positive effects have been optimised. The previous findings of the HRA remain relevant and valid - the TBP will not have adverse effects on the integrity of protected sites, alone or in combination.

How the results of consultation have been taken into account

- 24 Consultation is an important aspect of SA and there was statutory and public consultation at each key stage of the Local Plan preparation and the SA as follows:

TBP Stage and Documents Consultation	SA/SEA Stage and Documents Consultation
TBP Scoping Issues Public Consultation October-November 2013	
Evidence gathering	SA/SEA Scoping Report December 2014 Five weeks statutory & public consultation Final SA Scoping Report February 2015

Draft Tewkesbury Borough Plan (TBP) Proposed Vision & Objectives, Draft Policies & Site Options Initial Regulation 18 Public Consultation February 2015	Initial SA Report (January 2015) Public Consultation February 2015
Draft TBP Preferred Options Vision & Objectives, Preferred Policies & Site Options Revised Regulation 18 Public Consultation Autumn 2018	SA Report (August 2018) Revised Regulation 18 Public Consultation Autumn 2018
Pre-Submission TBP Regulation 19 Public consultation Autumn 2019	SA Report (July 2019) Regulation 19 Public Consultation Autumn 2019
Submission TBP Submission to Secretary of State 18 May 2020	SA Report Submission to Secretary of State 18 May 2020
Examination Hearings 16-18 & 23-25 February and 9-11 & 16-18 March 2021	Examination Hearings 16-18 & 23-25 February and 9-11 & 16-18 March 2021
Main Modifications Consultation 1 November 2021- 4 January 2022	SA Report (September 2021) Consultation 1 November 2021- 4 January 2022
Adoption of TBP June 2022	SA Adoption Statement June 2022

25 SA and consultation responses have been considered in an iterative and ongoing way with the plan-making process and in accordance with the requirements of the SEA Regulations. Representations have been recorded and the responses made to issues and concerns raised have been published, including at key statutory stages, as follows:

- SA Scoping Report December 2014
- Appendix III of Preferred Options SA Report (August 2018) summarises SA representations to consultation and responses
- Appendix III of Pre-Submission SA Report (July 2019) summarises SA representations to consultation and responses
- The SA Addendum Report (September 2021) outlines issues raised and discussed at the examination and resulting in the proposed Main Modifications

All consultation representations and responses are available on the Council's website under pages for the Tewkesbury Borough Plan¹⁰.

¹⁰ <https://www.tewkesbury.gov.uk/tewkesbury-borough-plan-examination-library#submitted-evidence-base-and-supporting-documents>

Reasons for choosing the Local Plan as adopted, in the light of other reasonable alternatives

- 26 The SEA Regulations require assessment of the likely significant effects of implementing the plan and “reasonable alternatives” taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan; and the reasons for selecting alternatives should be outlined in the Report. The UK Government's planning practice guidance¹¹ states that “reasonable alternatives are the different realistic options considered by the plan-maker in developing the policies in its plan. They must be sufficiently distinct to highlight the different sustainability implications of each so that meaningful comparisons can be made. The alternatives must be realistic and deliverable”.
- 27 There is limited possibility for investigating strategic options for the Tewkesbury Borough Plan as this was investigated through the preparation of the GCT JCS, including testing and reporting through SA. However, potential site allocation options were investigated and tested through SA using the SA framework of objectives in a comparable and consistent manner. The findings were reported in the SA Report (July 2019) and detailed in Appendix VI (2018 & updated 2019). The reasons for selecting and rejecting site options were outlined in Table 6.3 and in accordance with the requirements of the SEA Regulations.
- 28 The ‘do-nothing’ scenario is not an option for a Local Plan as councils are required to provide for their identified development needs. However, this was considered by the SA process and the SA reported that significant negative effects on environmental factors were likely without a plan and that positive effects for socio-economic factors were less likely to be implemented. Doing nothing is not a reasonable alternative for the TBP since a strategy with locally relevant Policies and local (non-strategic) site allocations is required to avoid negative effects and ensure a sustainable delivery of the required development in the Tewkesbury area and as identified in the JCS (Policies SP1 & SP2).
- 29 Overall, the reasons for choosing the Tewkesbury Borough Plan as adopted include that the adopted Plan progresses the overall Vision and for high quality development in the Tewkesbury Borough area, meeting identified needs for housing and employment whilst avoiding significant change to the intrinsic character of the area and securing the most benefits and the least negative effects for sustainable development.

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal>

Measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant sustainability/ environmental effects of the implementation of the Local Plan

- 30 The SEA Regulations require that the significant environmental effects of implementing the plan should be monitored with the purpose of identifying unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage and being able to undertake appropriate remedial action. Local Planning Authorities are required to produce Monitoring Reports¹² on the progress of Local Plans. Government Guidance on SA/SEA advises a pragmatic approach with shared monitoring for the SA/SEA and the Plan.
- 31 The GCT JCS includes Part 7 on Monitoring & Review, and the Tewkesbury Council undertakes various monitoring. It is considered that these indicators will be sufficient to identify any unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage and provide information on the predicted effects from the SA. No additional proposed monitoring that might be required as part of the SEA process was indicated from the findings of the SA.

¹² Tewkesbury Borough Annual Monitoring Reports available at: <https://www.tewkesbury.gov.uk/tewkesbury-borough-plan-examination-library#monitoring-documents>