ABOUT THE SA/SEA AND THIS REPORT

URS was commissioned by Waverley Borough Council to undertake an independent Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Core Strategy. SA seeks to identify the economic, social and environmental impacts of a plan and suggests ways to avoid or minimise negative impacts and maximise positive ones.

This Non-Technical Summary gives an overview of the main findings of the SA. If you would like to find out more details, please see the main report.

ABOUT THE CORE STRATEGY

Waverley Borough Council are in the process of preparing their Core Strategy. The Core Strategy is a planning document that sets out the overall vision and objectives for the Borough and provides a guide for how this will be achieved.

The Core Strategy includes a Spatial Strategy for the Borough that sets out how much development there will be and identifies broadly the locations where it will go.

In preparing the Core Strategy a number of different options concerned with where development could go have been considered. The conclusion was that the main focus for new housing and other development should be on the four main settlements of Farnham, Godalming, Haslemere and Cranleigh. Small scale development will continue to be allowed in the villages. The Sustainability Appraisal found this to be the best mix of alternatives considered, including that of a new freestanding settlement.

In terms of housing numbers, the Council has concluded that 230 new dwellings per year strikes the best balance between delivering new homes needed in the area, whilst recognising the rural character of Waverley. The Sustainability Appraisal supports this conclusion, taking account of other alternatives.

The options considered have also been subject to consultation. Statutory consultees such as the Environment Agency, Natural England and English Heritage had the opportunity to give their opinion about the options, as did members of the public, interest groups and businesses. The feasibility and practicability of each option was also considered.

POLICY CONTEXT

The Waverley Core Strategy sets the overall planning framework for the Borough. All the other planning documents in the Local Development Framework (LDF) will build upon the principles within it.

The LDF is a ‘folder’ of local planning documents. The LDF will replace the existing Local Plan. By having a ‘folder’ rather than one large plan covering everything documents can be updated as required. The Core Strategy is a key document within this ‘folder’.

The Core Strategy should generally conform to planning policy at a regional level. In Waverley this is the South East Plan.

SA FRAMEWORK

At the Scoping Stage of the SA process a set of objectives are developed. These are statements about what the plan should be trying to achieve in order to deliver sustainable development in the Borough.

The ‘SA Framework’ is the name given to this set of objectives. An SA Framework is developed out of:

- The key messages and objectives of other strategies, plans and programmes;
- Key sustainability and environmental protection objectives established at the international level (e.g. by European law);
• Research into the current social, economic and environmental issues in Waverley; and
• Sustainability issues identified as a result of consultation with stakeholders and the public.

During the scoping stage a SA Framework was developed for Waverley and this is this SA Framework that was used in the appraisal of the policies.

ABOUT THE SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

The potential effects of the Core Strategy have been identified by comparing the policies contained in the Core Strategy against the objectives within the SA Framework.

The effects under each of these topics have been summarised in this report below.

Identified effects are divided into those which are significant and those which are minor. This summary discusses those effects that are significant only. If you would like to see more detail on the predicted minor effects please see the main report.

POPULATION

It was considered that the Core Strategy is unlikely to have significant effects, either adverse or beneficial on Population.

HEALTH

It was judged that the Core Strategy is unlikely to have significant effects, either adverse or beneficial on Health.

EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMY

It was judged that the Core Strategy is unlikely to have significant effects, either adverse or beneficial on Employment and Economy.

TRANSPORT AND ACCESSIBILITY

Policy CS3: Sustainable Transport is likely to offer significant benefits in the longer term in relation to encouraging efficient patterns of movement (SA Objective 18) through locating development where it is accessible by forms of transport other than the private car. This will contribute to the improvement of existing, and provision of new, transport schemes and encourage non-car use.

CRIME AND SAFETY

It is not thought likely that the Core Strategy will have significant effects on Crime and Safety.

HOUSING

Policy CS5: Affordable Housing on Development Sites is likely to offer significant benefits in relation to SA Objective 4 (Ensure everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent and affordable home) in the longer term as more affordable housing is provided, given the longer lead-in times for major developments.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

It was judged that the Core Strategy is unlikely to have significant effects, either adverse or beneficial on Cultural Heritage.
CLIMATE

Policy CS2: The Amount and Location of Housing could potentially have a significant adverse effect in relation to reducing vulnerability to climate change, especially flooding (SA Objective 14) as the larger settlements are subject to a medium to high risk of surface and groundwater flooding, according to the Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment carried out for the Borough.

However, this flood risk is linked to localised and site-specific conditions which can be addressed in the design of any development proposed for these locations. Therefore individual development site assessments would be required to determine the level of flood risk for a specific site and the appropriate level of flood defence to offset this risk. River flooding has also been indentified as an issue within the urban areas of Farnham, Godalming, Cranleigh and Chiddingfold.

AIR

It is not thought likely that the Core Strategy will have a significant effect on Air Quality in the Borough.

SOIL

It was considered that the Core Strategy is unlikely to have significant effects, either adverse or beneficial on Soil.

WATER

It was judged that the Core Strategy is unlikely to have significant effects, either adverse or beneficial on Water.

BIODIVERSITY

Policy CS16: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation seeks to conserve and enhance biodiversity and will likely offer significant benefits in relation to maintaining and enhancing biodiversity and soil (SA Objective 11) in the longer term.

The policy sets out a hierarchy of important sites and habitats and seeks contributions from development for the protection, management and enhancement of biodiversity. Development will not be permitted within locally designated sites unless it is necessary for appropriate on-site management and will not have an adverse impact. Development adjacent to locally designated sites will not be permitted where it would have an adverse impact. River corridors, canal network, trees, woodland and hedgerows are also protected.

Development within the Hindhead Concept Statement Area will not be permitted if it is likely to have a significant effect on the Wealden Heaths Phase II Special Protection Area (a ‘European’ site with the highest level of protection for nature conservation). Similarly, development that would result in a net increase in residential accommodation within 400m of the boundary of the Wealden Heaths Phase I and Phase II Special Protection Areas will need to demonstrate that there will be no adverse effects on the ecological integrity of the Special Protection Area.

Policy CS17: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area is concerned with the conservation of the ecological integrity of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area and will likely offer significant benefits in the long term. It prevents new residential development within 400m of the Special Protection Area boundary and requires mitigation for development within 5km of the Special Protection Area boundary. This is in line with recommendations made by Natural England with specific reference to the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area.

LANDSCAPE

It was considered that the Core Strategy is unlikely to have significant effects, either adverse or beneficial on Landscape.
WASTE

It is not thought likely that the Core Strategy will have a significant effect on Waste.

CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

As well as identifying individual effects of the Core Strategy against the SA Objectives an important part of the SA process is to assess how individual effects interact with one another to identify whether there are any cumulative effects that relate to the implementation of different policies in the Core Strategy.

The implementation of the Core Strategy is likely to result in a range beneficial and adverse effects; however few of these effects were found to be significant. An assessment of the cumulative effects of the Core Strategy identified that many policies within the Core Strategy are likely to contribute towards achieving the same sustainability objective.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT & HOW TO COMMENT

Any comments on this document must be made no later than 17:00 pm on Friday 5th October 2012. If you would like to comment on the SA please visit the online consultation web pages www.waverley.gov.uk/consult or contact:

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