

Neighbourhood Planning Guidance Note 36

Your plan - Contributing to Sustainable Development

August 2015



This Guidance Note explains sustainable development, what it means and how it relates to your Neighbourhood Area. It also shows you what sustainability can look like and how you can tell when your Plan is meeting one of the basic conditions 'to contribute to sustainable development'.

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Your plan - Contributing to Sustainable Development

This Guidance Note explains sustainable development, what it means and how it relates to your Neighbourhood Area. One of the 'basic conditions' your plan will be required to demonstrate is how it contributes towards sustainable development as a whole. Therefore this guidance is intended to highlight the issues which need to be addressed and assist you complete that element of your Basic Condition Statement.

Whilst numerous definitions of sustainable development exist the following is the most universally accepted and is used in the National Planning Policy Framework:

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

To understand what this means we have to consider that everything in the world is linked; the people, the environment, the other organisms rely on each other for their existence. So all the resources we use or have available to us have to be shared.

Whilst this is true now it is also true over time so the definition above requires us to make sure that the resources we use and have available to us, will also be available to **future generations**.

The idea of limitations becomes important when you consider the number of people on the earth and their lifestyle, and the fact that the natural systems those lifestyles rely on are finite or can only keep supplying us with services if we don't exhaust their ability to do so.

The unsustainable approach

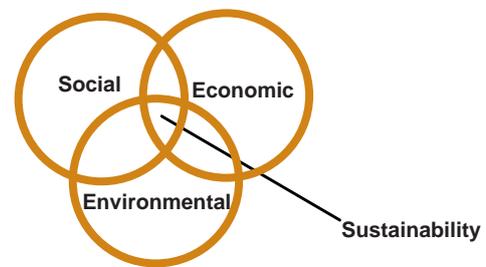
Historically most decisions that we make as a society, communities or individuals have been made with single interests being uppermost in our minds. Usually this single interest is money; as individuals we have to choose what goods we buy based on what we can afford and do not usually consider other factors such as the social or environmental consequences of that purchase. This is either because we do not know what those consequences are, are not in a position to

act on that knowledge, or even deliberately choose to ignore them.

Very often those environmental and social consequences then end up creating problems elsewhere, problems which require further money or resources to address.

This situation arises whenever a single interest is considered above others, whether that be financial, social or environmental. This is often seen as being a short-sighted approach however necessary it may or may not be at the time and, especially when money is the bottom line, something that creates a false economy.

A better, but not necessarily easier, approach is to try and consider all three interests simultaneously when decisions are being made. This is exactly what sustainability requires. The following diagram illustrates how doing this creates a space for a sustainable solution;



A Win-Win-Win Situation

In practice this obviously requires thinking carefully about a particular issue within your Neighbourhood Area and how it can be addressed. Working out the consequences is the key especially across the three aspects listed above. As this will help you to choose the option that has the best or least adverse consequences across all three aspects. Another useful rule for creating sustainable options is wide consultation initially to ensure that all possible solutions have been considered and all aspects can be considered early in the process.

As an example; Your community may have a high number of people who have transport problems, incomes are low so access to a car for many residents is also difficult. Public transport is too infrequent or comes at the wrong time to be of much use. Thinking about the likely solutions, and the resultant consequences of those solutions and talking to local people effected by

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the issues might then end up with a car-sharing project emerging as the most sustainable. Such a solution would create a win-win-win outcome as it would; combat **social isolation** by bringing people together; reduce the **economic costs** of running a car by sharing the costs; and bring **environmental benefits** by helping to reduce congestion and atmospheric pollution by using a car more efficiently. This is just one example of many thousands but the advantages across the social, economic and environmental areas of interest can be clearly seen.

A 'question of degrees' and 'Apples and Oranges'

A word of caution: sustainability should be considered a 'direction' to move towards. There is no single solution that will be completely sustainable. Instead you can only come up with a solution that is, by degrees, 'more sustainable' than others.

It will also inevitably involve compromise and very often trying to weigh up and compare things that are fundamentally different to quantify and hard to reconcile (eg. The need for jobs, as opposed to safeguarding biodiversity).

This is why it is important to identify and document the issues in your emerging plan and record why and how you have arrived at your outcomes. This will enable the Plan's examiner and the decision makers that follow you to understand your thinking.

Sustainability in Herefordshire

The SEA of the Local Plan - Core Strategy identifies the following points that represent the main issues for sustainability in the county and describes the consequences of these if unaddressed.

- **Population Change**
Increasing Age Profile The ageing population trend is likely to continue. However, if neighbourhood planning policies result in the provision of more jobs it is possible this could encourage a higher proportion of working age residents within the county and help change the population characteristics. Also without the availability of employment opportunities and affordable housing in the rural parts of Herefordshire, the small towns are likely to see a continuation of this trend.

Half the population living in rural areas High levels of commuting may lead to smaller towns and villages increasingly becoming 'dormitories' and becoming less viable, whilst road traffic would remain high with the associated impacts on air pollution etc. This may also exacerbate the ageing population profile of the county as young people move outside the county to find work.

- **Affordable Housing**
High ratio of property price to household earnings & Shortfall of provision of affordable dwellings/increase in number of people accepted as homeless An ongoing lack of affordable housing would lead to many people (e.g. first time buyers and lower paid workers) increasingly priced out of the market and the population profile of the county may become distorted (potentially even more dominated by richer/elderly people). This may have secondary effects on the economy reducing the county's ability to attract key workers in particular.
- **Economic Activity/Employment**
Gross Value Added (GVA) remains lower than regional and national figure per head & Reduce and manage reliance on traditional employment sectors and ensure Herefordshire can attract business in technology and knowledge intensive sectors. If your policies were to result in the provision of more jobs in the county it is possible this could encourage more employment and economic activity and attract technology and knowledge intensive sectors. Without the plan, it is likely that current trends will continue and that employment will rely on traditional employment sectors.
- **Transport and Accessibility**
High reliance on the private car & traffic congestion in Hereford and strain on existing infrastructure. Ongoing poor provision and use of public transport may cause more rural parts of the County to become increasingly isolated in terms of access to employment opportunities and community services and facilities, whilst high car use will increase levels of air pollution and noise disturbance.

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- **Climate Change and Flood Risk**
Significant areas of the County are at risk of flooding. Predicted increase in number of intense rainfall days in winter could lead to increased frequency of winter flash flooding events in the future. Development already situated in areas of high flood risk, e.g. around the Wye and its tributaries, would be likely to experience increasing problems with flooding and associated social and economic problems. Existing developments in such areas may reduce in value due to these issues.
- **Water Quality**
The River Wye SAC is already experiencing impacts on water quality as a result of changing land use and point-source discharges, therefore any increase in demand for water treatment could exacerbate this problem. Throughout the development of the Core Strategy there has been significant work undertaken by the Council, the Environment Agency, Natural England and other stakeholders to ensure appropriate mitigation is built into the plan to avoid proposed development having adverse effects on water quality in the River Wye. Without this mitigation built into the Local Plan - Core Strategy it would be more likely to have adverse effects on water quality.
- **Biodiversity & Stewardship**
Habitats and species of national, regional and local importance are under pressure from the adaptation and diversification of farming and forestry employment. Much of the county's biodiversity assets remain dependent on continued sensitive agricultural management. However, the planning system is limited in the extent to which it can regulate agricultural management; at best, your policies can seek to protect and enhance biodiversity within your area. can draw attention to the impact of agricultural practice on environmental quality, and encourage use of sustainable management practices (such as by supporting a high uptake of agri-environmental schemes).
- **Waste & Recycling**
Increase in amount of waste production over recent years, with too much still going to landfill. There is an existing drive to increase levels of recycling and composting within the county and a shift in general public

opinion towards recycling should help levels to increase over the coming years, with or without the Core Strategy. However, the infrastructure to support this change may come under strain, and your policies could help to ensure sufficient provision of new waste facilities.

Whilst these issues will have resonance throughout the county it is of course possible that your own Neighbourhood Plan may identify separate, more local sustainability issues . Some of these will emerge during the Strategic Environmental Assessment, whilst many others may be identified or alluded during your consultation activities.

Your basic condition statement should demonstrate how your plan is contributing towards sustainable development and how any adverse effects are being prevented, reduced, or offset. A completed SEA will help to provide this evidence.

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Neighbourhood Planning guidance notes available:

Deciding to produce a Neighbourhood Development Plan

1. Which is the right tool for your parish
2. What is a Neighbourhood Development Plan
3. Getting started
4. A guide to procedures
5. Funding

Plan Production

6. Developing a Vision and Objectives
7. Generating options
8. Writing planning policies
9. Environmental Assessment
10. Evidence base and information requirements
11. Implementation and Monitoring
12. Best practice community engagement techniques
13. Statutory consultees
14. Writing a consultation statement
15. Planning and other legislation
16. Web enabling your plan
17. Using OS based mapping
18. Glossary of planning terms

Topics

19. Sustainable Water Management in Herefordshire
20. Guide to settlement boundaries
21. Guide to site assessment and choosing allocation sites
22. Meeting your housing requirements
23. Conservation issues
24. Recreational areas
25. Renewable energy
26. Transport issues
27. Community Infrastructure Levy

Additional Guidance

28. Setting up a steering group
29. Creating a questionnaire
30. Community facilities
31. Conformity with the Local Plan (Core Strategy)
32. Examinations of Neighbourhood Development Plans
33. Guide to Neighbourhood Development Plan Referendums
34. Tourism
35. Basic Conditions
36. Your plan - Contributing to sustainable development