

# **SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL OF THE BILLINGSHURST VILLAGE CENTRE SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**

## **Introduction**

The Billingshurst Village Centre Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) supports the community's vision for the village as set out in the Community Led Plan. This document identifies a vision specifically for Billingshurst Village Centre, which is summarised below:

**'Our vision for Billingshurst is that of a thriving community with our residents, young and old, proud of our village and rightly celebrating our surroundings, our achievements and our future'.**

The Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provides a number of guiding statements which new development will need to consider, particularly on the following topics, in order to realise this vision.

1. Character and design;
2. Sense of arrival and moving around;
3. Choice and vitality of the centre;
4. Open spaces and public realm;
5. Improved car parking.

The SPD builds upon the existing policies of Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) in the context of the Billingshurst Village Centre and concentrates predominantly on guiding the design of new buildings/public realm/open spaces, the legibility of the area, improved vehicular parking and maintaining the viability and vibrancy of the village centre.

## **Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment**

In accordance with planning legislation, it is necessary to ensure that the documents that the Council produces contribute to the principles of sustainable development as far as is practicable. The National Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) document under 'Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal' (paragraph 008) confirms that SPDs do not require a sustainability appraisal, but may in exceptional circumstances require a strategic environmental assessment if they are likely to have significant environmental effects that have not already been assessed during the preparation of the Local Plan (i.e. the HDPF).

The basis for Strategic Environmental Assessments and Sustainability Appraisal legislation is European Directive 2001/42/EC 'on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the Environment'. This document is also known as the Strategic Environmental Assessment or SEA Directive. This directive was transposed into English law by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, or the SEA Regulations.

Both the HDPF and the forthcoming Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD) have/will be subject to a Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment examining the effects of the policies or development locations on the key criteria of sustainable development. The results of the HDPF Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment process show that the plan/development is likely to have the following effects:

#### Positive Impacts

- There will be positive impacts on the provision of both market and affordable housing in the District;
- The local and sub-regional economy is likely to benefit from an increased number of residents in the area;
- The plan is considered to focus new employment and residential development within the existing built-up area boundaries of sustainable settlements;
- A number of policies will help retain the overall rural characteristics and existing settlement pattern of the District.

#### Negative Impacts

- Without mitigation, all development, individually or cumulatively with other development, may cause damage to the landscape character of the area or its ecological value;
- It was noted that the baseline data supporting the Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment for the adopted HDPF indicated that the environmental quality of the District is at risk, particularly in terms of air quality;
- The Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment for the adopted HDPF highlighted uncertainties as to the scale and location of development that may come forward through neighbourhood planning.

It is noted that the Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment process found that the preparation of Supplementary Planning Documents will help to minimise many of the adverse impacts of the development that were identified, for example by ensuring that developments are sensitively designed so as to protect and enhance the landscape as far as possible as well as minimising the impact on climate change. In addition, although the SPD does provide additional guidance and opportunities, it does not introduce new policies over and above the existing HDPF. Indeed, although the SPD will provide further guidance on how developments in the village should be designed, it will not change the overall quantum, nature or scale of development and does not allocate specific resources in this case. In the event that the Council is minded to grant planning permission for a site within the Billingshurst Village Centre, any mitigation measures identified as part of the existing Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment would be incorporated into the planning conditions as appropriate.

## **Conclusions from the Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Opinion Report (February 2016)**

The Billingshurst Village Centre SPD does not introduce new planning policies; these are already set out in the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) that was adopted in November 2015. The social, economic and environmental impacts of these policies were assessed as part of the Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment that was undertaken alongside the preparation of the plan.

The SPD is to provide additional guidance for developers who are proposing new development schemes in the Billingshurst village centre. This will ensure that specific issues such as flooding, design and accessibility are correctly addressed as schemes are devised. It was concluded within the Screening Opinion report that the SPD does not have any additional impacts on the value or vulnerability of social, economic or environmental features that have been previously considered.

It is therefore the Council's opinion that the Billingshurst Village Centre SPD does not require a Strategic Environmental Assessment under the Assessment of Environmental Plans and Programmes Regulations (2004). This position is considered supportable because there will be no significant environmental effects arising from its implementation, since it supplements existing national planning policy guidance and the HDPF, and does not introduce any new policy requirements. Consequently, it is considered that there is no need to carry out any further sustainability work other than that which is outlined in the paragraphs above and within the previously published Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Opinion Report (February 2016).