



Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Bramley Neighbourhood Plan



Environmental Report
Non-technical Summary
May 2015

REVISION SCHEDULE

Rev	Date	Details	Prepared by	Reviewed by	Approved by
1	May 2015	Non-technical summary of the Environmental Report published alongside the Draft ('Pre-submission') Bramley Neighbourhood Plan	Paul McGimpsey Senior Consultant	Mark Fessey Principal Consultant	Steve Smith Technical Director

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Cover images

Top left: Bramley railway station (Basingstoke Observer)

Top right: Green Farm (Bramley Parish Council)

Middle right: Bramley Inn public house

Bottom left: St. James' Church (Charles D P Miller)

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 AECOM is commissioned to undertake Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Bramley Neighbourhood Plan (NP). The plan is being prepared by Bramley Parish Council.
- 1.1.2 The NP, once adopted, will present planning policy and guidance for the neighbourhood area. Alongside the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan it will provide a framework for determining planning applications up to 2029.
- 1.1.3 SEA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely effects of a draft plan, and alternatives, with a view to avoiding and mitigating adverse effects and maximising the positives.
- 1.1.4 This is the **non-technical summary (NTS)** of the SEA Report (known as the ‘Environmental Report’) being published alongside the draft plan. This summary should be read alongside the main report.

Structure of the Environmental Report / this NTS

- 1.1.5 The Environmental Report (and this NTS) sets out to answer four questions:
- What is the scope (i.e. parameters) of the SEA?
 - What has plan-making / SEA involved up to this point?
 - In particular, how has assessment of ‘reasonable alternatives’ fed-in?
 - What are the assessment findings and recommendations at this current stage?
 - i.e. what would be the effect of the draft plan, were it to be implemented?
 - What are the next steps?

2 WHAT IS THE SCOPE OF THE SEA?

- 2.1.1 An important first step in the SEA process involves establishing the 'scope', i.e. those sustainability issues and objectives which should be a focus of the SEA, and those that should not. The following is a brief summary of some of the sustainability issues discussed within the Environmental Report (as falling within the scope of SEA). It is important to emphasise that the following list is not comprehensive.

Environmental issues

- 2.1.2 Evidence suggests that air quality may be less than ideal in the village centre when heavy traffic (i.e. a situation whereby there are cars queuing back from the level crossing) coincides with the time when children are walking to or from school (past all of the idling cars). Areas of particular sensitivity to increased traffic flows are likely to be within the more congested parts of the village and the routes with highest traffic flows, such as queuing at the C32 railway crossing in Bramley village and lanes around the north side of the village used as 'rat runs' to bypass the level crossing and avoid queues.
- 2.1.3 Several instances of localised flooding have been recorded by the parish council on the north side of Bramley village in recent years due to poor drainage. In January and February 2014 the parish council undertook a survey of flooding in and around the village of Bramley, which recorded flooding of the surrounding country roads, particularly Minchens Lane, Cufaude Lane and Oliver's Lane. It also noted waterlogged ground at Strawberry Fields, Oakmead and Minchens Field, and of the stream north of Clift Meadow at maximum capacity where it flows under the railway bridge.
- 2.1.4 The NP area has a rich historic environment. A number of features and areas for the historic environment in the plan area are recognised through historic environment designations. These include listed buildings and scheduled monuments, which are nationally designated, and conservation areas, which are designated at the local level.
- 2.1.5 New development has the potential to lead to incremental but small changes in landscape and townscape character and quality in and around the plan area. This includes from the loss of landscape features and visual impact. There are also likely to be potential effects on landscape/townscape character and quality in the vicinity of the road network due to an incremental growth in traffic flows.

Socio-economic issues

- 2.1.6 According to the most recent census data available, in 2011 the total population of the parish of Bramley was 4,233. This was an increase of 885 from the 2001 census, or a 26.4% population growth. The rate of growth in Bramley parish is significantly higher than borough, regional and national comparators
- 2.1.7 The parish has deprivation levels that are significantly lower than borough, regional and national averages. General health across the parish is broadly favourable compared to regional and national averages, and slightly less favourable than Basingstoke and Deane averages.
- 2.1.8 While Bramley has passenger services every half hour in each direction (i.e. to Basingstoke or Reading) the number of trains going through Bramley (which include local, cross country, freight, and empty running trains) can be anything up to 200 per day. The line is the only route connecting Southampton to the north. If the line was electrified in the future, rail traffic would be likely to increase. Immediately to the north of Bramley station there is a level crossing (with the C32, Sherfield Road). This level crossing causes considerable delay with anecdotal evidence suggesting that during the day the level crossing is closed to road traffic for an average of 29 minutes every hour. This can cause considerable congestion as road traffic, cyclists and pedestrians are forced to wait for the level crossing to reopen.

SEA framework

2.1.9 Drawing on the review of sustainability issues, a concise list of sustainability objectives was established under ten ‘topic’ headings. This list of topics and objectives provides a methodological ‘framework’ for assessment work (i.e. assessment of policy proposals, see below).

Sustainability topics and objectives (the ‘SEA framework’)

Topic	Sustainability objective
Air quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimise air pollution and maintain good air quality.
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect and enhance all biodiversity and geological features.
Climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote climate change mitigation in Bramley. Support the resilience of Bramley to the potential effects of climate change.
Historic environment and landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect, maintain and enhance Bramley’s cultural heritage resource, including its historic environment and archaeological assets. Protect and enhance the character and quality of landscapes and townscapes.
Land, soil and water resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the more efficient use of land. Promote sustainable waste management solutions that encourage the reduction, re-use and recycling of waste. Use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner.
Population and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cater for existing and future residents’ needs as well as the needs of different groups in the community, and improve equality of access to local, high-quality community services and facilities. Reduce poverty and deprivation and promote more inclusive and self-contained communities. Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing, and ensure an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures.
Health and well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the health and well-being of Bramley’s residents.
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.
Economy and enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance the vitality and viability of the NP area.

3 WHAT HAS PLAN-MAKING / SEA INVOLVED UP TO THIS POINT?

3.1.1 It is a legislative requirement that ‘reasonable alternatives’ be subjected to appraisal prior to the draft plan being finalised for consultation, and that information on reasonable alternatives is presented for consultation within the SA Report published alongside the draft plan.

3.1.2 As such, ‘reasonable alternatives’ in relation to housing policy were developed and appraised prior to the NP being finalised for consultation, and information on the alternatives is presented within the main body of the Environmental Report. The issue of housing is significant in the Bramley NP area given the strong feeling expressed by the community about the level of development that has recently occurred.

3.1.3 The reasonable alternatives appraised / reported on are as follows:

- Option 1 - low growth within or directly adjacent to existing settlement boundaries
- Option 2 - low growth distant from existing settlement boundaries
- Option 3 - high growth within or directly adjacent to existing settlement boundaries
- Option 4 - high growth distant from existing settlement boundaries

3.1.4 A low growth approach would mean that an individual development would not be allowed to have more than 50 homes.

Summary alternatives assessment findings

Topic	Rank of preference / effect categorisation			
	Opt 1	Opt 2	Opt 3	Opt 4
Air quality	1★	3=	2	3=
Biodiversity	1★	3	2	4
Climate change	1★	4	2	3
Historic environment and landscape	1★	2	3	4
Land, soil and water resources	1★	2	3	4
Population and communities	1★	3	2	4
Health and well-being	1★	3	2	4
Transport	1★	2=	2=	4
Economy and enterprise	2	3=	1★	3=

3.1.5 Overall, higher growth options (**Options 2 and 4**) perform relatively poorly in terms of a number of sustainability objectives compared to the two lower growth options. Both higher growth options, as well as **Option 3** involving growth outside the existing settlement boundary, are predicted to have a **significant negative effect** on transport due to additional traffic this would likely generate and the pressure this would place on the village’s road network which is already under strain. **Significant negative environmental effects** were also identified as being likely for higher growth development scenarios in relation to the historic environment

and landscape. This is due to the likelihood of higher growth being incompatible with the maintenance of the heritage and landscape values of the village and the surrounding area.

- 3.1.6 **Significant positive effects** were only predicted in relation to one topic; for **Option 1** in relation to population and communities. This option would provide for some additional housing to meet additional demand while not overwhelming existing community infrastructure and possibly providing for improvement to community infrastructure.

[What is the parish council's response to alternatives assessment findings?](#)

- 3.1.7 In light of these findings for of the four alternatives appraised and the views of the community (particularly as expressed through the questionnaire responses in September/October 2014), the Bramley Parish Council (via the Steering group of the NP) considers that a policy restricting individual development to a maximum of 50 dwellings per site close to the existing settlement boundaries against the alternatives is the preferred policy for the size and location of residential development in the parish.

4 WHAT ARE THE ASSESSMENT FINDINGS AT THIS CURRENT STAGE?

- 4.1.1 An obvious aim of the Environmental Report is to present an assessment of the draft plan (under the SEA framework established through scoping). Summary assessment findings are presented here.

Air quality

- 4.1.2 The NP is not predicted to negatively affect air quality.

Biodiversity

- 4.1.3 The NP is not predicted to negatively affect biodiversity. Consideration could be given as to whether Policy RE4 should make direct reference to areas designated as SINC.

Climate change

- 4.1.4 The NP policies make appropriate provision for climate change, both in terms of limiting greenhouse gas emission and adapting to the effects of climate change; there are no recommendations.

Historic environment and landscape

- 4.1.5 The NP is considered to have a **significant positive effect** in terms of the historic environment and landscape; there are no recommendations in relation to historic environment and landscape.

Land, soil and water resources

- 4.1.6 The NP is considered to have a positive effect in terms of promoting the efficient use of land; there are no recommendations.

Population and communities

- 4.1.7 The NP is considered to have a **significant positive effect** in terms of population and communities; there are no recommendations.

Health and well-being

- 4.1.8 The NP is considered to have a positive effect in terms of health and well-being; there are no recommendations.

Transport

- 4.1.9 No significant transport effects are predicted; there are no recommendations in relation to transport.

Water, flood risk and other climate change adaptation issues

- 4.1.10 No effects are predicted with respect to economy and enterprise; there are no recommendations.

Conclusions

- 4.1.11 The assessment presented above highlights that the draft NP performs well in terms of many sustainability issues/objectives, with significant positive effects identified as likely in terms of: historic environment and landscape and population and communities. No significant negative effects are currently predicted. The assessment identified that consideration could be given as to whether Policy RE4 should be strengthened to make direct reference to areas designated as SINC.

5 WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

- 5.1.1 Subsequent to consultation on the draft ('pre-submission) plan and Environmental Report the main issues raised will be identified and addressed by the parish council. Once the plan has been finalised it will then be submitted to the Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council (BDBC) alongside a 'Consultation Statement' that describes issues or concerns raised through the Pre-submission Plan / Environmental Report consultation and how these have been addressed. The BDBC will then 'publicise' the Proposed Plan so that stakeholders can make representations that may then be considered at Examination.
- 5.1.2 Eventually, if and when the plan is 'made' (i.e. adopted) by the BDBC, an 'SEA Statement' will be published alongside that: A) Explains the steps taken to finalise the plan; and B) Presents measures decided concerning monitoring.
- 5.1.3 At the current stage there is a need to present 'a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring' only. In light of the appraisal findings presented in this report, it is suggested that monitoring might focus on heritage, landscape and traffic and transport.