



# Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the Bramley Neighbourhood Plan



**Environmental Report Update**  
**Non-technical Summary**  
**June 2016**

## REVISION SCHEDULE

| Rev | Date      | Details  | Prepared by                            | Reviewed by                          | Approved by                          |
|-----|-----------|--|--|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1   | June 2016 | Non-technical Summary of the Environmental Report Update submitted alongside the Draft ('Submission') Bramley Neighbourhood Plan | Mark Fessey<br>Principal<br>Consultant | Steve Smith<br>Technical<br>Director | Steve Smith<br>Technical<br>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)*

# Introduction

AECOM is commissioned to undertake Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) in support of the emerging Bramley Neighbourhood Plan (NP).

The NDP, once adopted, will present planning policy and guidance for the neighbourhood area, alongside the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan.

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.

This is the **non-technical summary (NTS)** of the SEA Report (known as the 'Environmental Report') Update being submitted (to Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council) alongside the plan.

## Structure of the Environmental Report Update / this NTS

The Environmental Report Update (and this NTS) sets out to answer four questions:

1. What's the scope (i.e. parameters) of the SEA?
2. What has plan-making / SEA involved up to this point?
  - In particular, how has assessment of 'reasonable alternatives' fed-in?
3. What are the assessment findings and recommendations at this current stage?
  - i.e. what would be the effect of the draft plan as published, were it to be implemented?
4. What are the next steps?

## What's the Scope of the SEA?

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. Drawing on the review of sustainability issues, a concise list of sustainability objectives was established under 'topic' headings. Taken as a whole, this list comprises the methodological 'framework' for the SEA.

### The SEA framework

| Topic                              | Sustainability objective   |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Air quality                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Minimise air pollution and maintain good air quality.</li></ul>  |
| Biodiversity                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Protect and enhance all biodiversity and geological features.</li></ul>  |
| Climate change                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Promote climate change mitigation in Bramley.</li><li>• Support the resilience of Bramley to the potential effects of climate change.</li></ul>  |
| Historic environment and landscape | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Protect, maintain and enhance Bramley's cultural heritage resource, including its historic environment and archaeological assets.</li><li>• Protect and enhance the character and quality of landscapes and townscapes.</li></ul>        |
| Land, soil and water resources     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure the more efficient use of land.</li><li>• Promote sustainable waste management solutions that encourage the reduction, re-use and recycling of waste.</li><li>• Use and manage water resources in a sustainable manner.</li></ul> |

| Topic                      | Sustainability objective  |
|----------------------------|---|
| Population and communities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>Reduce poverty and deprivation and promote more inclusive and self-contained communities.</li> <li>Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing, and ensure an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures.</li> </ul> |
| Health and well-being      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve the health and well-being of Bramley's residents.</li> </ul>   |
| Transport                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.</li> </ul>  |
| Economy and enterprise     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance the vitality and viability of the NP area.</li> </ul>  |

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

The Environmental Report explains how **reasonable alternatives** were assessed in relation to **housing growth policy**, i.e. the issue set to be addressed through Policy HP1 of the plan.

A range of alternative approaches might potentially have been explored (see discussion in Chapter 10 - "Establishing reasonable alternatives" of the Environmental Report), but ultimately it was determined that there was merit in assessing the following alternatives:


- 1) Permit only schemes of up to 25 homes
- 2) Permit only schemes of up to 50 homes
- 3) Permit only schemes of up to 100 homes

Summary assessment findings are presented within the table below. For each option the assessment identifies and evaluates 'likely significant effects' on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability topics and issues/objectives identified through scoping as a methodological framework. **Red** shading is used to indicate significant negative effects, whilst **green** shading is used to indicate significant positive effects. A numbering system is also used to **rank** the performance of the alternatives, regardless of significant effects.

### Summary alternatives assessment findings


| (1) Permit only schemes of up to 25 homes<br>(2) Permit only schemes of up to 50 homes<br>(3) Permit only schemes of up to 100 homes<br>(4) Policy supporting housing with no restriction on size |  |   |       |       |
|---|--|---|-------|-------|
| Topic   | Discussion of <u>significant effects</u><br>(and discussion of <u>relative merits</u> in more general terms)   | Rank of performance / effect categorisation |       |       |
|   |  | Opt 1                                       | Opt 2 | Opt 3 |
| Air quality   | <p>Air quality in Bramley is generally considered to be good although traffic congestion, particularly around the C32 railway level crossing may be causing reduced air quality.</p> <p>It is difficult to differentiate the alternatives, as traffic congestion will primarily relate to the quantum and location of growth, rather than the type of scheme that are supported.</p> <p>It might be suggested that larger schemes may lead to greater potential to</p> | =   | =     | =     |



| Topic                              | Discussion of <u>significant effects</u><br>(and discussion of <u>relative merits</u> in more general terms)  | Rank of performance /<br>effect categorisation  |       |       |
|------------------------------------|---|---|-------|-------|
|                                    |   | Opt 1   | Opt 2 | Opt 3 |
|                                    | deliver road infrastructure upgrades that in turn limit traffic congestion; however, it is difficult to draw this assumption with any certainty.  |   |       |       |
| Biodiversity                       | <p>The NP area does not contain any internationally or nationally designated sites of biodiversity or geodiversity importance, although there are several Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), patches of ancient woodland and historic hedgerows.</p> <p>It is difficult to differentiate the alternatives, as biodiversity impacts will primarily relate to the quantum and location of growth, rather than the type of scheme that are supported.</p> <p>It might be suggested that larger schemes may lead to greater potential to deliver open space and habitat creation/enhancement; however, it is difficult to draw this assumption with any certainty.</p>  | =   | =     | =     |
| Climate change                     | <p>A primary consideration is the need to minimise car dependency, i.e. encourage more trips to be made by walking, cycling or public transport.</p> <p>In this regard, It is difficult to differentiate the alternatives, as a primary consideration is the quantum (given that Bramley is a rural location, where there is inevitably car dependency) and location of growth (e.g. proximity to the village centre), rather than the type of scheme that are supported.</p> <p>It might be suggested that larger schemes may lead to greater potential to support new/enhanced bus services, and walking/cycling infrastructure; however, it is difficult to draw this assumption with any certainty.</p>   | =   | =     | =     |
| Historic environment and landscape | <p>There is a need to avoid impacts to the Bramley and Bramley Green Conservation Area, and more generally to the rural village character. Bramley Parish Council has undertaken Character Appraisals of the various distinct parts of the village, with a notable conclusion being that the size and density of the most recent development (German Road/Kirby Drive, 271 dwellings) is not in keeping with Bramley's rural village character; and this assessment is supported by consultation findings. The community's view, expressed in responses to consultation, is that large housing schemes put much valued rural character of Bramley at risk.<sup>1</sup></p> <p>On this basis, it is fair to conclude that a policy supporting only smaller developments is to be supported, from a historic environment and landscape perspective. However, there is considerable uncertainty, as under the unlikely scenario whereby Bramley receives large scale additional growth it might be that one large scheme would be preferable to several small. As such, significant effects are not predicted.</p> |  | 2     | 3     |
| Land, soil and water resources     | <p>The 'Agricultural Land Classification - Provisional (England)' dataset (which is very low resolution) indicates predominantly 'grade 3' agricultural land surrounding Bramley, with some possibility of higher quality 'grade 2' land. The dataset does not distinguish between 'grade 3a and grade 3b'.<sup>2</sup></p> <p>It is not possible to differentiate the alternatives, as the degree of impact will relate to the quantum and location of growth, rather than the type of scheme that are supported.</p> <p>Water resource issues are less relevant. There are not notable sensitivities locally that mean that the water environment is a constraint to any reasonably foreseeable growth scenario.</p>  | N/a   | N/a   | N/a   |

<sup>1</sup> A dedicated community consultation was undertaken in 2014 to determine what size of future housing development would be considered most appropriate by the local community. The majority view of local people (229 respondees - 51%) was that future housing developments should be up to a maximum of 50 new dwellings in each individual proposal.

<sup>2</sup> The National Planning Policy Framework classifies 'best and most versatile' agricultural land as that which is either grade 1, grade 2 or grade 3a. In order to determine agricultural land classification with accuracy there is a need to apply a site level survey, and surrounding Bramley very little land has been surveyed to this level of accuracy (see magic.gov.uk).

| Topic  | Discussion of <u>significant effects</u><br>(and discussion of <u>relative merits</u> in more general terms)   | Rank of performance /<br>effect categorisation |       |   |
|--|--|--|-------|---|
|  |  | Opt 1  | Opt 2 | Opt 3   |
| Population and communities   | <p>Bramley has more limited facilities than might be expected for a village of its size, with no dentist, vet, library or bank. Through community engagement it is understood that the following facilities, services and amenities are needed or desired by residents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extension / improvements to the medical practice</li> <li>• Additions / improvements to the footpath and cycle networks</li> <li>• Controlled short term car parking near the village centre</li> <li>• User safe access across the railway at all times</li> <li>• Additional pedestrian crossings on the C32 road</li> <li>• Bowling green</li> <li>• Skate park</li> <li>• Improvements / extensions to the village hall</li> <li>• Improvements to the road network by-passing the village</li> </ul> <p>With relatively few facilities in Bramley, and the lack of regular bus service, there is a reliance on cars to access the type of facilities which are provided in the other villages. This is an issue for those with limited access to a car.</p> <p>It is difficult to differentiate the alternatives, as a primary consideration is the quantum of growth (given that growth can support upgrades to community infrastructure locally) and location of growth (proximity to the village centre), rather than the type of scheme that are supported. It might be suggested that larger schemes may lead to greater potential to support upgrades to community infrastructure; however, it is difficult to draw this assumption with any certainty.</p> <p>However, there is one other consideration - namely the need to deliver affordable housing. Policy is set to require that new housing schemes include some affordable housing; however, viability considerations inevitably also 'come into play', meaning that larger (more viable) developments are better placed in this respect. On this basis, it is possible to conclude that Option 3 is best performing; however, it is not possible to conclude significant effects. It may well be that the Local Plan policy on affordable housing can be realised in practice through small schemes.</p> | 3  | 2     |  |
| Health and well-being  | See discussion above in relation to walking/cycling and access to services/facilities. It is difficult to differentiate the alternatives with certainty.   | =  | =     | =   |
| Transport  | See discussion above in relation to traffic congestion, walking/cycling and use of public transport. It is difficult to differentiate the alternatives with certainty.   | =  | =     | =   |
| Economy and enterprise   | It is not possible to differentiate the alternatives with any certainty. In the Bramley context, there is little reason to suggest that larger development would be more likely to be mixed use, i.e. deliver a degree of employment (e.g. space for small start-ups, or work/live units).   | =  | =     | =   |
| <p><b>Conclusion</b></p> <p>There is a fairly clear 'trade-off' to be made, in that smaller housing schemes are more likely to be in keeping with the village character of Bramley, whilst larger schemes are more likely to deliver affordable housing and may also be more likely to deliver infrastructure upgrades. There is evidence (e.g. in the form of consultation feedback) to suggest that the former consideration is overriding; however, it is not possible to predict significant effects (recognising that a policy supporting only smaller housing schemes will have limited or no effect on the total quantum of growth, i.e. the number of small schemes that are permitted).</p> |  |  |       |   |

# WHAT ARE THE ASSESSMENT FINDINGS AT THIS CURRENT STAGE?

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

The NP does not contain any policies specifically related to air quality. Indirectly some policies could be seen to address this issue, with Policy H1 requiring all new development to be within or adjoining existing settlement boundaries which will help to limit additional road traffic and associated emissions to air. Also, the Policy H1 requirement that all new housing must be to meet local needs may influence the quantum of housing growth and therefore the traffic / air quality situation. Furthermore, Policy D2 requires that residential development has good access to public transport. Policy T1 promotes the improvement of the footpath and cycleway network and this will also assist to improve the viability of active travel as an alternative to car-based travel. Policy E1 relating to new employment development contains provisions that require no adverse effects from road traffic which would also assist in reducing emissions to air.

In conclusion, the NP may have minor positive effects on air quality; and there are no recommendations.

## Biodiversity

The NP contains two rural environment policies that offer general protection to local green spaces (Policy RE3) and the wider natural environment (Policy RE4). Policy RE3 is focussed more on protecting green spaces for amenity reasons but as such spaces can provide ecological habitat, this policy would have some benefit for local biodiversity.

Of more direct importance is Policy RE4, which provides a high level of protection to existing trees, hedgerows and woodlands (as identified in Appendix E to the NP). This policy would offer a high level of protection and development must not result in the loss of important trees, hedgerows and woodlands identified in Appendix E. This appendix also identifies the SINC's in the vicinity of the village although the policy does not make direct reference.

It is also noteworthy that the NP promotes development within or adjoining the existing settlement boundaries whereas most of the habitats of biodiversity lie outside these settlement boundaries. As such, the pattern of development promoted under the NP will go a long way to avoid negative effects on biodiversity.

In conclusion, 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

The NP does not contain any policies specifically related to climate change. Indirectly, some policies are relevant with Policy H1 requiring all new development to be within or adjoining existing settlement boundaries which will help to limit additional road traffic and associated greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Furthermore, Policy D2 requires that residential development has good access to public transport; and Policy T1 promotes the improvement of the footpath and cycleway network, which should encourage active travel.

Policy RE1 relates directly to reducing flood risk and includes clear requirements that development proposals must not increase flood risk on the development site itself or increase flood risk elsewhere. There is a specific requirement for sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).

In conclusion, the NP policies make appropriate provision for climate change, both in terms of limiting greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change; there are no recommendations.

## Historic environment and landscape

Policy H1 would restrict the size of individual developments to no more than 50 dwellings. While effects on historic environment and landscape are location specific, in general terms smaller schemes are more likely to be in keeping with the village's historic and landscape values. Furthermore, the containment of development within or adjoining existing boundaries under this policy will have positive effects on landscape values. Finally, the Policy H1 requirement that all new housing must be to meet local needs may influence the quantum of housing growth and therefore support the maintenance of historic character.

Policy D1 would complement this aim by seeking to protect and enhance the rural character of Bramley. This proposed policy covers all factors that would be expected such as the scale and density of development and also includes consideration of certain views (set out in Appendix D). Policy D2 contains a number of sub-policies that would have townscape/landscape benefits. Key sub-policies are (a), (e), (f), (g), (i) and (l). Collectively, it is considered that these sub-policies would have a positive effect.

Landscapes and the historic environment beyond the existing settlement are also given a large degree of protection under Policies RE2 and RE3. Policy RE2 in particular seeks to maintain the area of separation between Bramley and Sherfield on Loddon and prevent coalescence of these two settlements. This policy also specifically protects the scheduled monument of Bulls Down Iron Age Fort. Together with Policy RE3 which protects local green spaces, this policy would likely have a **significant positive effect** in terms of maintaining landscape and heritage values in the NP area.

In conclusion, the NP is considered to have a significant positive effect in terms of the historic environment and landscape. However, there is uncertainty recognising that the plan will not directly influence the total quantum of growth directed to the village. There are no recommendations.

## Land, soil and water resources

The NP does not contain any policies directly addressing the sustainability objectives. Regarding the efficient use of land, however, the NP policies (particularly Policy H1) very clearly seek to contain growth within or adjoin existing settlement boundaries. Policy RE2 specifically seeks to main the area of separation between Bramley and Sherfield on Loddon. The general thrust of the NP in seeking to contain further development is consider positive in terms of using land efficiently. While the NP does not contain policies specifically covering waste management water resources, these two issues have not been identified as being particularly important to the NP area and are adequately addressed in other policy documents such as the Local Plan.

In conclusion, 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

The NP recognises the growth pressures facing the village and that there has been demand for further housing in the past and that this trend is likely to continue. Housing policies H1 and H2 provide specifically for new local housing and Policy H2 in particular is notable in that it seeks to ensure that the housing needs to a wide range of groups within the community are met (e.g. older and younger persons' housing needs etc.). With respect to the sustainability objectives it is considered that Policy H2 would have a **significant positive effect**.

Policies ACV1 and ACV2 seek to protect assets of community value (ACV) such as local shops, the doctors' surgery and the only public house in the village. Retention of local amenities and community infrastructure is considered essential to meeting the needs of existing and future residents of Bramley. It has been noted that, compared to neighbouring villages of Overton and Whitchurch, Bramley suffers from a lack of community infrastructure and that previous development in the village has not always been commensurate with improvement to community infrastructure. Inclusion of existing ACVs under these policies is considered likely to have a **significant positive effect**.

Policy T1 would also assist in encouraging access for pedestrians and cyclists to community facilities such as schools etc. and this would be beneficial.

In conclusion, the NP is considered to have a significant positive effect in terms of population and communities; there are no recommendations. However, it is recognised that there are potentially some draw-backs to a policy of limiting the size of any individual development scheme to 50 homes - see discussion within Chapter 11, above.

## Health and well-being

While the NP is limited in what it can directly influence in terms of health and well-being, it is acknowledged that the built environment can have some influence on these factors. Policies ACV1 and ACV2 seek to protect assets of community value (ACV) many of which are sports and play area facilities. These facilities make an important contribution to encouraging physical activity amongst the village's residents and their protection is positive in terms of promoting health and well-being. The doctors' surgery is also included as an ACV which again is a very important community facility.

In conclusion, the NP is considered to have a positive effect in terms of health and well-being; there are no recommendations.



## Transport

Policy H1 requires all new development to be within or adjoining existing settlement boundaries which will help to limit additional road traffic. Furthermore, Policy D2 requires that residential development has good access to public transport. Policy T1 promotes the improvement of the footpath and cycleway network and this will also assist to improve the viability of active travel as an alternative to car-based travel. Policy T2 seeks to improve road safety in Bramley. Also, the Policy H1 requirement that all new housing must be to meet local needs may influence the quantum of housing growth and therefore the traffic situation.

The general thrust of the transport policies is positive. The NP does acknowledge, however, that resolution of strategic transport issue, most notably the major problem of road congestion caused by the C32 level crossing cannot be solved by the NP. Given the severe congestion at the level crossing and the parking pressures around the railway station, any further housing development is likely to exacerbate the current problem.

In conclusion, minor positive effects are predicted; there are no recommendations in relation to transport.

## Economy and enterprise

The housing and ACV policies would, collectively, contribute to improving the viability and vitality of the village. Similarly, Policy E1 provides for development for employment use, provided particular environmental standards are met. Given that the NP does not actively encourage new employment development it is not possible to conclude there will be positive effects.

In conclusion, no effects are predicted with respect to economy and enterprise; there are no recommendations.

## Conclusions and recommendations at this current stage

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 (albeit with some uncertainty, given that the plan does not address total housing quantum). No significant negative effects are predicted.

# WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

Regulation 16 requires that the Local Authority 'publicises' the Proposed Plan so that stakeholders can make representations that may then be considered at Examination. It will be appropriate for the Local Authority to also publicise the updated Environmental Report, with a view to informing representations.

Regulation 17 requires that the Local Authority submits (to the person appointed to carry out the Examination) the Proposed Plan and a copy of any representations which have been made on the Submission Plan (and this Environmental Report Update). It may be appropriate for the Local Authority to also submit this Environmental Report Update, with a view to informing the Examination.

Regulations 18 and 19 require that, subsequent to the Examination, the Local Authority publishes the Examiner's Report and a Decision Statement. The Decision Statement sets out whether or not the Local Authority is prepared to 'make' (i.e. adopt) the plan. If the Local Authority is prepared to make the plan, then a referendum can be held. It may be appropriate for the Local Authority to also publish an updated Environmental Report, with a view to informing the Referendum.

Regulation 20 states what the Local Authority must do when the plan is 'made' (i.e. adopted). The SEA Statement must be published alongside the made Plan. The SEA Statement must present:

- information on the decision, i.e. must explain why the final plan approach was decided-upon in light of SEA and consultation; and
- measures decided concerning monitoring.

At the current stage – i.e. in the Environmental Report - there is a need to present 'a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring' only. In light of the assessment findings presented in Part 3 of this report, it is suggested that monitoring might focus on heritage and landscape, traffic and transport and affordable housing delivery, seeking to ensure that a policy supporting only smaller schemes is not resulting in unintended consequences.

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