

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Fiskerton Neighbourhood Plan

SA Report

Non-technical Summary

April 2019

Quality information

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1. Introduction

AECOM is commissioned to lead on Sustainability Appraisal (SA) in support of the emerging Fiskerton Neighbourhood Plan (FNP).

The FNP is being prepared by Fiskerton Parish Council in the context of the adopted Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (CLLP, 2017). Once the FNP has been 'made' it will have material weight when deciding on planning applications, alongside the CLLP.

SA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and alternatives, in respect of sustainability issues/objectives, with a view to avoiding and mitigating negative effects and maximising the positives.

This report is the Non-technical Summary (NTS) of the SA Report currently available for consultation alongside the 'submission' version of the FNP.

Structure of the SA Report / this NTS

SA reporting essentially involves answering the following questions in turn:

1) What has plan-making / SA involved **up to this point**?

- Including in relation to 'reasonable alternatives'.

2) What are the SA findings **at this stage**?

- i.e. in relation to the draft plan.

3) What happens **next**?

Each of these questions is answered in turn below. Firstly though there is a need to set the scene further by answering the question 'What's the scope of the SA?'

What's the scope of the SA?

The scope of the EA is reflected in a list of topics and objectives. Taken together, this list indicates the parameters of SA, providing a methodological 'framework' for assessment.

The SA framework

SA topic	SA objective
Biodiversity	Protect and enhance all biodiversity and geological features.
Climate change	Reduce the level of contribution to climate change made by people and activities
	Support resilience to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding
Landscape and historic environment	Protect, conserve and enhance heritage assets within the Neighbourhood Plan area
	Protect and enhance the character and quality of landscapes and villagescapes.
Land, soil and water resources	Ensure the efficient and effective 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 / community	Cater for existing and future needs of different groups in the community, and improve access to local, high-quality community services and facilities.
	Reduce deprivation and promote a more inclusive and self-contained community.
	Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing, and ensure an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures.
Health	Improve the health and wellbeing of residents.
Transport	Promote sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.

2. Plan-making / SA up to this point

An important element of the required SA process involves assessing ‘reasonable alternatives’ in time to inform development of the draft proposals, and then publishing information on reasonable alternatives for consultation alongside the draft proposals.

As such, Part 1 of the SA Report explains how work was undertaken to develop and assess a ‘reasonable’ range of alternative approaches to the allocation of land for development, or ‘growth scenarios’.

Specifically, Part 1 of the report –

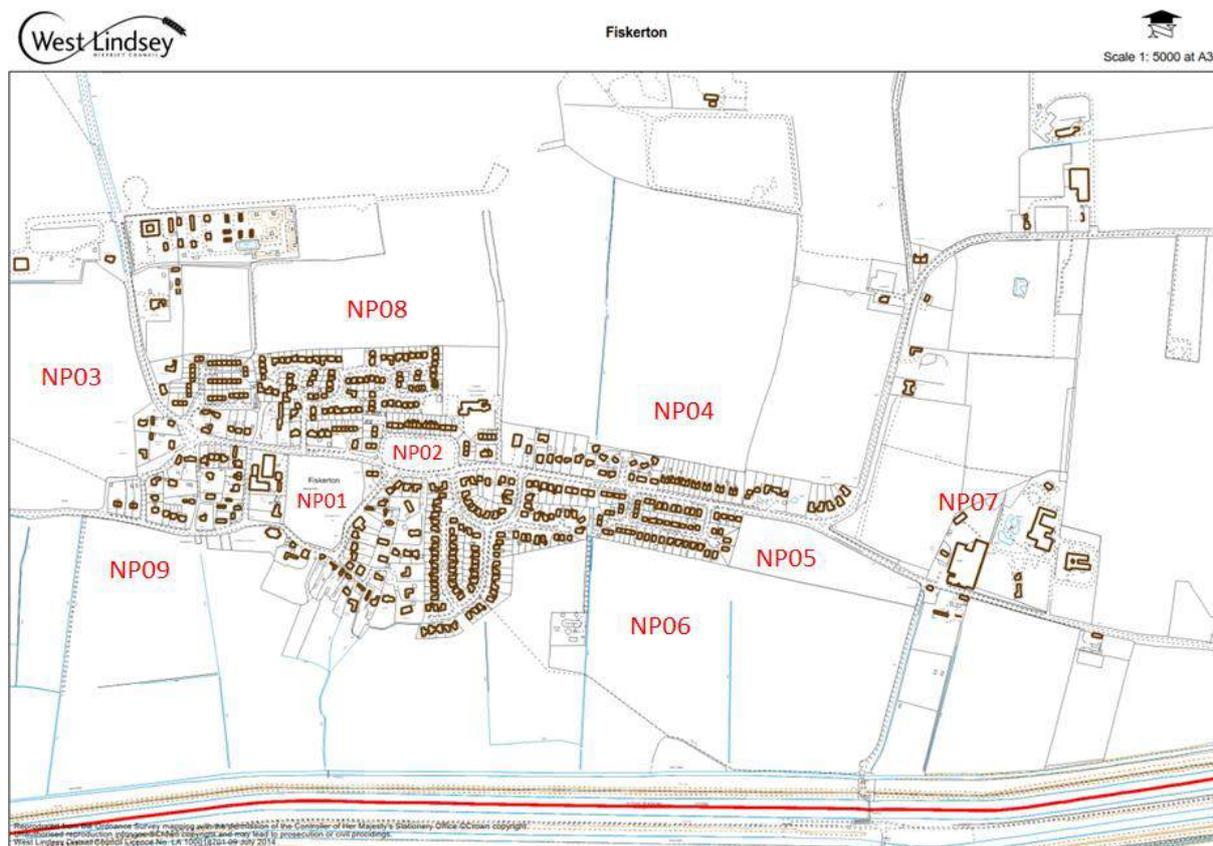
- 1) Explains the process of **establishing** growth scenarios
- 2) Presents the outcomes of **assessing** the growth scenarios
- 3) Explains reasons for **establishing** the preferred scenario, in light of the appraisal

Establishing growth scenarios

The main report explains how growth scenarios were established in 2019 subsequent to process of considering strategic options/parameters alongside the site options in contention for allocation, informed by plan-making work (also SA work) completed over recent years.

The figure below shows the broad location of the site options considered.

Broad location of site options



Ultimately three reasonable alternatives were established, as set out in the table below.

The reasonable growth scenarios

	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
NP04			200 homes
NP05	40 homes		
Part NP09 (outside FZ)	30 homes		
Part NP04 (western field) and extended north		85 homes	
Total	70 homes	85 homes	200 homes
'Planning gain' assumed	None	As per Figure 5.3	Gifting of the Paddock to the PC

N.B. precise details of what is deliverable at each site, and equally what might be delivered by way of enhancements to community infrastructure ('planning gain') is uncertain at the current time. This matter is discussed further as part of the appraisal below.

Appraising the growth scenarios

The table below presents appraisal findings in relation to the growth scenarios. With regards to methodology:

Within each row (i.e. for each of the topics that comprise the SA framework) the columns to the right hand side seek to both **categorise** the performance of each option in terms of 'significant effects' on the baseline (using **red** / **green**) and also **rank** the alternatives in order of performance. Also, '=' is used to denote instances where the alternatives perform on a par (i.e. it not possible to differentiate between them), and '?' is used to highlight uncertainty.

Appraisal findings

Objective	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
Biodiversity	2	★1	2
Climate change	2	★1	★1
Landscape and historic environment	2	★1	★1
Land, soil and water resources	=	=	=
Population and community	?	?	?
Health	3	2	★1
Transportation	★1	2	★1

Discussion

The appraisal finds Scenario 3 to perform best in terms of the greatest number of objectives; however, it does not necessarily follow that Scenario 3 is best overall, as the objectives are not assigned any particular weight. Taking each topic / objective in turn:

- Biodiversity - all of the sites in question would lead to little or no risk of impacts to existing areas of priority habitat (notably the woodland patches to the north of the village); however, Scenario 3 would impact on three existing hedgerows (albeit the proposal is to retain the hedgerows), and lead to increased traffic on Hall Lane, which is an identified 'green lane'. Both Scenarios 2 and 3 would involve delivery of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), to include new ponds.
- Climate change - the primary consideration here relates to adaptation to climate change, and in particular avoidance of areas likely to be at risk of flooding under a future climate change scenario. On this basis, Scenario 1 performs poorly, and it is appropriate to 'flag' the risk of *significant* negative effects (as indicated by red shading). The capacity of sites NP05 and NP09 has been defined on the basis of the area of land falling outside of the flood risk zone (and with a 20 dwellings per hectare assumption applied); however, detailed examination, at the planning application stage, could potentially highlight a risk of the flood zone stretching further to the north under a climate change scenario. Flood risk attenuation measures might be delivered to the south of the housing schemes; however, this could prove to be at the expense of grade 2 (i.e. higher quality) agricultural land. Finally, with regards to Scenarios 2 and 3, neither site is at risk of fluvial flood risk, and whilst there are known problems in respect of surface water drainage, there is good potential for mitigation through SuDS.

- Landscape and historic environment - Scenario 1 gives rise to a concern primarily on the basis of the need for a relatively high density development scheme at NP09 (if the housing target is to be met), which is adjacent to the village church; and, furthermore, both Scenario 1 sites might be perceived as further extending the already linear built form of the village (and potentially giving rise to a risk of further linear growth in the future, particularly to the east). However, it is not possible to conclude that negative effects will be 'significant', given that the church is screened by mature vegetation (albeit mainly deciduous trees), and the linear expansion would be limited. With regards to Scenarios 2 and 3, neither gives rise to any significant concern (albeit both would impinge on views from public rights of way). Scenario 2 would give rise to a missed opportunity in respect of reinstating public access to the Paddock, which forms an integral part of the village's historic core; however, the matter of the Paddock is more central to discussions below.
- Land, soil and water resources - the low resolution national dataset shows a narrow band of higher quality 'grade 2' agricultural land to the south of the village, which could potentially serve to suggest that growth to the north is preferable; however, the national dataset is low resolution, and hence not suited to differentiating sites at this scale. Furthermore, the dataset shows all other land surrounding the village to be 'grade 3', which could potentially mean that all land is 'best and most versatile' (the NPPF defines best and most versatile as grades 1, 2 and 3a).
- Population & community - several factors pull in different directions, leading to overall uncertainty:
 - Housing - the first point to note is that Scenario 1 likely to fall short of achieving the CLLP target of 15% growth in housing stock, and could potentially fall significantly short if the developable area of each site proves more limited than is currently assumed. Scenario 3 would significantly exceed the target, and a scheme of this scale would deliver a good mix of new housing, presumably to include a full quota and good mix of affordable housing, and potentially to include specialist housing (e.g. older persons housing); however, a concern is that an objectively assessed need for this quantity of homes has not been established, as discussed above (see para 5.6). On this basis, Scenario 2 is preferable from a 'housing' perspective.
 - Community infrastructure and vitality more generally - the Church Commission is the major land-owner under all scenarios, and is willing to 'gift' land for community infrastructure / planning gain in return for support for housing, with the extent of planning gain presumably proportionate to the quantum of housing. There is no certainty regarding planning gain under Scenario 1; however, a further consideration is Policy LP2 of the Local Plan, which serves to suggest that modest housing schemes can be appropriate for villages such as Fiskerton. Scenario 2 would (it is assumed) involve gifting of non-developable (due to the safety risk zone) land to the west for sports and recreation uses; however, Scenario 3 is preferable as the Paddock (site NP01) would be gifted, with public access restored in turn. The Church Commission has previously proposed housing on the Paddock; however, it is now classed as not developable, since being designated as Local Green Space. Finally, in respect of Scenario 3, there is a need to recall the guidance provided by the District Council to the Parish Council in the past, regarding the need for Fiskerton to reach a 'critical mass' population of c.2,000 residents (see para 5.6), in order to retain services, facilities and employment.
- Health - Scenarios 2 and 3 would lead to planning gain that is supportive of outdoor recreation and/or sport, and hence good health; however, there is a question-mark regarding the suitability of sports and recreation facilities within the safety risk zone under Scenario 2, also noting the potential for Primetake to seek expansion of their operations in the future. A return of public access to the Paddock would be a *significant* benefit to the village under Scenario 3, albeit there could be some detriment to Hall Lane, which forms part of the Viking Way long distance path.
- Transportation - With regards to walking and cycling, Scenarios 2 and 3 would focus growth more closely to the village centre; however, all potential development locations are within a walkable distance. With regards to road traffic, there are some concerns regarding the access arrangements under Scenario 2, noting proximity to the village school and play area.

Establishing the preferred Scenario

The following is the Parish Council's response to the appraisal:

The Parish Council developed its preferred option due to the need of the future and current community requirements initially based on the results of the Parish plan survey carried out 2012/13.

The initial question was what was needed that could be included in a NDP that would secure a sustainable future for the village whilst retaining its own unique identity. Discussion with the LPA concluded that for a small community to retain all its current services and expand its infrastructure there was a need to increase population. Further discussion during 2014 led to the decision, in agreement with the LPA, that Fiskerton would need to increase population to approx 2,000 residents, this finally led to the decision again in agreement with the LPA that the need equated to approx 200 new dwellings with a mix of affordable/social and market value units to cater for young people to be able to afford to stay in the village, families, by providing affordable and market value family homes and smaller units suitable for elderly residents to be able to downsize thus freeing up more family size homes.

There was also a need in the village for the return of the Manor Farm Paddock to community /recreational use as had been the case for more than a generation before access to the public being removed by the landowners in the near past. In addition to the above requirements the Plan had to contribute to all other social and economic requirements and objectives.

Many sites were considered however most were set aside as not available or they could not deliver the numbers and benefits required.

The Site to the North was assessed against other sites in 2016 and was found to be the most sustainable in planning terms at that time. Also the landowners considered it their preferred site to cater for appx 200 dwellings. The landowners also were open to negotiating the Manor Farm Paddock ownership as part planning gain. We were therefore able to achieve two important requirements for the community in one action.

The selection was put to the residents in 2014 and was received by large majority. Therefore the PC started to develop the preferred choice to its inclusion in the second Regulation 14 consultation carried out December 2018.

We feel that Options 1 and 2, as appraised above, both have some merits, but fail to fulfil the requirement of our community for sustainable growth over the life of our NDP. In contrast, Option 3 (200 homes at Site NP04: North of Ferry Road) ticks all our boxes as below:

- 1) Central location - inclusive to village community.*
- 2) Site access - easy readymade access form Ferry Road and Hall Lane.*
- 3) Health and wellbeing - public access to open space as landowners agree to include Manor Farm Paddock ownership as part planning gain for a development of appx 200 dwellings.*
- 4) Transport - promotes walking and cycling, reducing use of cars, also easy access to established public transport.*
- 5) Flood risk - not in flood risk zone.*
- 6) Housing needs - the site is immediately available and large enough to accommodate the needed mix of dwellings to cater for current and any fluctuation in future housing needs.*
- 7) Streetscene - the site does not detract from streetscene on approach to the village from any of the three entry points.*
- 8) Historic core - the site does not compromise the historic core of the village but is close enough to be inclusive to newcomers.*

3. Appraisal findings at this stage

Part 2 of the SA Report presents an appraisal of the FNP as a whole. Appraisal findings are presented as a series of narratives under the 'SA framework' themes.

Biodiversity

There is a tension between the proposed 200 home housing scheme and the achievement of biodiversity objectives; however, concerns cannot be described as significant, and there will be good potential for mitigation and enhancement measures to be implemented through the development management process.

Climate change

No major concerns are raised, despite the extent of flood risk in the Parish. A recommendation is made to ensure due consideration is given to flood risk as part of any proposed expansion of Short Ferry Caravan Park.

Landscape and historic environment

Policy 1 (Development to the North of Fiskerton) is supported on balance, and Policy 2 (Design of New Development) is strongly supported. Despite the positive aspects of the plan it is not possible to conclude significant positive effects, given the high growth strategy.

Land, soil and water resources

Both Policy 1 (Development to the North of Fiskerton) and Policy 12 (Expansion and development of Short Ferry Caravan Park) may lead to significant loss of best and most versatile agricultural land; however, there is no certainty.

Population and community

Policy 1 (Development to the North of Fiskerton) is supported on balance, particularly as it will result in the return of public access to the Paddock; however, there is a concern regarding the lack of an objectively assessed approach to support 200 homes growth. Other policies are mainly supported, although it is recommended that Policy 9 (Employment Development) might be more permissive.

Health

The plan performs very well, as a result of the planning gain set to result from housing growth, and significant positive effects are predicted.

Transportation

The plan performs very well, as the proposed location of housing growth is supportive of modal shift (walking, cycling, buses), but significant effects are not predicted.

Conclusions

The appraisal finds the Fiskerton Neighbourhood Plan to perform 'significantly' well in terms of health objectives, on the basis that it will result in the return of public access to the Paddock, which is a large open space in the centre of the village. The plan also performs well in terms of 'population and community', although there is a concern regarding the lack of an objectively assessed approach to support 200 homes growth. No significant negative effects are predicted; however, a number of issues/tensions are highlighted, notably in respect of biodiversity and loss of higher quality agricultural land. Recommendations are made to potentially improve the performance of the plan in respect of biodiversity, flood risk and employment; however, it is recognised that there will be a need consider wider implications before any of these are actioned.

4. Next Steps

Part 3 of the SA Report answers – What happens next? – by discussing plan finalisation and monitoring.

Plan finalisation

This SA Report accompanies the Submission version of the Fiskerton Neighbourhood Plan.

Following submission to West Lindsey District Council, the plan and supporting evidence will be published for consultation, and then subjected to Independent Examination.

At Independent Examination, the FNP will be considered in terms of whether it meets the Basic Conditions for Neighbourhood Plans and is in general conformity with the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan.

If the subsequent Independent Examination is favourable, the FNP will be subject to a referendum, organised by West Lindsey District Council. If more than 50% of those who vote agree with the Neighbourhood Plan, then it will be 'made'.

Once made, the FNP will become part of the Development Plan for West Lindsey District. At the time that the plan is made an SA Adoption Statement will be published that presents, amongst other things, 'measures decided concerning monitoring'.

Monitoring

This SA Report must present 'measures envisaged concerning monitoring' (Schedule 2(9) of the SEA Regulations).

The FNP commits the Parish Council to monitoring "the effectiveness of the policies on an annual basis", and also states: "The impact of the Neighbourhood Plan Policies on influencing the shape and direction of development across the Plan area will be monitored by the Parish Council. If it is apparent that any policy in this Plan has unintended consequences or is ineffective it will be reviewed. Any amendments to the Plan will only be made following consultation with the District Council, local residents and other statutory stake holders as required by legislation."

Given the appraisal findings presented above, it is recommended that monitoring efforts might focus on: biodiversity / green infrastructure (particularly in respect of the series of proposed SuDS features, and links to Hall Lane); employment activities (particularly at the former Tanya Knitwear site, and adjacent sites); and flood risk, i.e. the extent of the latest Environment Agency defined flood risk zones should be monitored.

