

Regional Sustainability Framework

Annex 2 - The Sustainability Appraisal Guide

In 2004 the regional partners committed to developing a stand-alone Sustainability Appraisal guide with a detailed methodology for Sustainability Appraisal and examples of implementation. This report sets out this methodology which was developed in 2006.

What is Sustainability Appraisal?

Sustainability Appraisal is a process that helps organisations to develop their plans, strategies or activities (they will be called 'plans' from now on) by assessing how sustainable they are. It can be carried out by using a straightforward checklist, shown in Figure 1 (Page 4-5).

A Sustainability Appraisal can help to:

- Evaluate and compare different plan options.
- Minimise negative impacts and maximise positive ones.
- Demonstrate the plan's overall contribution to sustainability.

The UK Government has defined five principles of sustainability¹:

1. Respecting the limits of the planet's environment, resources and biodiversity.
2. Meeting the diverse needs of all people in existing and future communities, promoting personal well-being, social cohesion and inclusion, and creating equal opportunity for all.
3. Building a strong, stable and sustainable community which provides prosperity and opportunities for all, and in which environmental and social costs fall on those who impose them and efficient resource use is incentivised.
4. Ensuring policy is developed and implemented on the basis of strong scientific evidence, whilst taking into account scientific uncertainty as well as public attitudes and values.
5. Actively promoting effective, participative systems of governance in all levels of society.

¹ Defra (2005) *Securing the Future*, <http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk>

Who should use a Sustainability Appraisal checklist? Why should we want to?

We all have a role in making the world more sustainable, for instance by reducing our climate change impacts and supporting our local communities.

In some cases there is a statutory requirement to carry out a Sustainability Appraisal. This guide complements the approach set out in the relevant national guidance. The section entitled -'Sustainability Appraisal under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004' - sets out where the relevant guidance can be found, how this RSF can be utilised to support this process and provides useful examples of where Sustainability Appraisal has been carried out within the region.

In other instances there may be no statutory requirement to carry out a Sustainability Appraisal. To reflect this, the Sustainability Appraisal checklist has been designed to be used by anyone, regardless of the type and size of organisation or plan. Where the resources and / or time do not exist to implement the full guide the checklist should be used as a starting point to integrate sustainable development principles into the organisations activities. By doing so we can identify the actions that each of our organisations can take to help deliver a healthy, strong and just society that lives within environmental limits.

The section entitled - 'Non statutory Sustainability Appraisal' - sets out where the relevant guidance can be found, how this RSF can be used as a starting point to support this process and provides useful examples of where innovative appraisal approaches have been developed within the region.

The benefits of carrying out a Sustainability Appraisal include:

- For community and voluntary sector groups, and Local Strategic Partnerships:
 - it provides a structure for comparing different approaches to a problem
 - it helps to make sure that decisions are well balanced and take all important factors into account
 - it shows how the group's activities meet government priorities and goals
 - it provides a broader view of how the organisation can contribute to sustainable development
- For businesses:
 - it can help to identify opportunities for greater efficiency and lower costs, for instance opportunities to reduce waste, energy and water use, and the need to travel
 - it can improve relations with employees, clients, and the wider public
- For public sector organisations, e.g. health care trusts:
 - it can identify mutually beneficial links with other agencies or organisations
 - it can provide data to help inform and justify decisions
 - it can support other programmes, e.g. Investors in People
- For local/regional authorities with statutory Sustainability Appraisal functions:
 - it is legally required for Development Plan Documents, Regional Spatial Strategies, Supplementary Planning Documents, some Community Strategies
 - it helps plans to become more sustainable, transparent and easier to understand
 - it is a productive use of time and resources².

² Therivel, R. and F. Walsh (2005) 'The Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive in the UK: One Year On', submitted to *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, available at www.levett-therivel.co.uk; Therivel, R. and Minas, P., 2002. 'Ensuring effective SEA in a Changing Context', *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal* 29(2), pp. 81-91.

Many organisations are already carrying out partial Sustainability Appraisals using other tools, for instance quality assurance standards or Investors in People. Some of the information in this guide may help to achieve these other standards. The other standards can also be expanded to become a full Sustainability Appraisal, by using the checklist.

Where possible an integrated approach to Sustainability Appraisal is recommended. Such an approach would meet the requirements of the SEA directive, Sustainability Appraisal, Health Impact Assessments and types of proofing including Rural Proofing.

How do we use the checklist (Figure 1)?

Step 1 - Decide what you are appraising: Are you doing a quick check of a business or an idea or a plan? Are you comparing different ways of running your organisation? Are you fine-tuning the final version of a plan? You will need to put appropriate headings in the first row of the checklist.

Step 2 - Decide on the team: Who wants to be involved? Who makes the decisions? Who knows about your organisation's goals, ideas and plans? Who can give an independent view? Teams of 2-5 people are best.

Step 3 - Check the objectives in the first column of the checklist, which is based on the Regional Sustainability Appraisal for the South East. Do all the objectives apply to the plan in question? Should some be added, deleted or reworded? Fine-tune them as appropriate.

Step 4 - For each objective in the first column of the checklist, ask yourself "will my plan, option or plan sub-component have a positive or negative impact on the objective (in the first column in the table)?" Put the answer in the appropriate cell. The answer can be + or -; or more detailed if appropriate.

Step 5 - If the plan has negative impacts, consider ways of reducing or eliminating them, and list them in the "suggested changes" column. **If you are comparing options, identify the option that would have the most positive and least negative impacts.**

If that option is strongly positive, and if it promotes a good mix of social, economic and environmental issues, then it is your preferred option in terms of sustainability; put it in the "preferred option" column and explain why.

If the most positive option still has many negative aspects, or if it is unbalanced (for instance if it strongly supports economic growth but would clearly harm the environment), then you may want to ask whether one of the other options is more sustainable overall, or you could try to identify new options that are more sustainable.

Figure 1: Sustainability Appraisal Checklist

Step 1 - Decide what you are appraising.

Step 2 - Decide on the team. The checklist can be filled in by one person or by a group.

Step 3 - Fine-tune the sustainability objectives to fit the plan. More detailed questions are in the Integrated Regional Framework. More information on some topics is shown in this guide's section on 'taking Sustainability Appraisal further'.

Sustainability objectives from the Regional Sustainability Framework: 'Will my plan/option have a positive or negative impact on...'	plan option or section:			Suggested changes, preferred option
	A	B	C	
1. Ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a decent, sustainably constructed and affordable home?	++	-		
2. Improve the health and well-being of the population and reduce inequalities in health?	0	++		
3. Reduce poverty and social exclusion and close the gap between the most deprived areas in the South East and the rest of the region?	-	+		
4. Raise educational achievement levels across the region and develop the opportunities for everyone to acquire the skills needed to find and remain in work?				
5. Reduce crime and the fear of crime?				
6. Create and sustain vibrant communities?				
7. Improve accessibility to all services and facilities including countryside and the historic environment?				
8. Encourage increased engagement in cultural activity across all sections of the community in the South East?				
9. Ensure high and stable levels of employment so everyone can benefit from the economic growth of the region?				
10. Sustain economic growth and competitiveness across the region?				
11. Stimulate economic revival in deprived areas?				
12. Develop a dynamic, diverse and knowledge-based economy that excels in innovation with higher value, lower impact activities?				
13. Develop and maintain a skilled workforce to support long-term competitiveness of the region?				
14. Improve efficiency in land use through the re-use of previously developed land and existing materials from buildings, and encourage urban renaissance?		on previously developed land	on greenfield site	Use recycled materials for new construction where possible
15. Reduce the risk of flooding and the resulting detriment to public well-being, the economy and the environment?				
16. Reduce air pollution and ensure air quality continues to improve?		reduces car use	no change	Activity B is best; if Activity C is chosen, provide bike racks?
17. Address the causes of climate change through reducing emissions of greenhouse gases and ensure that the South East is prepared for its impacts?				
18. Conserve and enhance the region's biodiversity?				
19. Protect, enhance and the region's countryside and historic environment?				
20. Reduce road congestion and pollution levels by improving travel choice, and reducing the need for travel by car/lorry?				
21. Reduce the global, social and environmental impact of consumption of resources by using sustainably produced and local products?				
22. Reduce waste generation and disposal, and achieve the sustainable management of waste?				
23. Maintain and improve the water quality of the region's rivers ground waters and coasts, and achieve sustainable water resources management?				
24. Increase energy efficiency, and the proportion of energy generated from renewable sources in the region?				

Step 4 - The appraisal can be in the form of numbers or symbols, or (often better) a more detailed explanation.

Step 5 - This column helps to identify measures to make the activity more sustainable.

What can we learn from the checklist?

The checklist can answer the following questions:

What aspects of sustainability does my plan cover particularly well or badly?

	Plan section			Suggested changes
	A	B	C	
	-	+	0	
	+	++	+	
	--	0	--	
	-	+	-	
	--	++	0	

Annotations: "good! we'll keep this" points to the row with (+, ++, +). "bad! this needs to change" points to the row with (--, 0, --).

What impacts does my plan have and what should I be doing about them?

	Plan section			Suggested changes
	A	B	C	
	-	+	0	Section A should be changed to...
	+	++	+	
	--	0	--	
	-	+	-	
	--	++	0	

Annotations: "ideas listed here!" points to the row with (--, 0, --).

Which of several options is the most sustainable?

	Option			Preferred option
	A	B	C	
	-	+	0	B is preferred because...
	+	++	+	
	--	0	--	
	-	+	-	
	--	++	0	

Annotation: "this one!" points to the row with (--, ++, 0).

Taking Sustainability Appraisal further

There is much additional information on Sustainability Appraisal and related approaches. Below are some key documents to act as starting points. Most of these, in turn, include links to further information.

Further information on...	This information would be most useful for:				Name and web-link
	community & voluntary sector groups	businesses	public sector organisations	authorities with statutory appraisal functions	
Sustainable buildings	√	√	√	√	SustaiNE <i>Building-in Sustainability</i> http://www.buildinginsustainability.co.uk
		√		√	DTI <i>Sustainable Construction</i> http://www.dti.gov.uk/construction/sustain
		√	√	√	Building Research Establishment <i>BREEAM</i> http://www.breeam.org
Sustainable resource use	√	√	√	√	Best Foot Forward <i>Sustainability Accounting</i> http://www.bestfootforward.com/sustacc.html
Sustainability for businesses		√			UK government gateway to social responsibility http://www.societyandbusiness.gov.uk The Sigma Project <i>Putting Sustainability into Practice</i> http://www.projectsigma.com Forum for the Future <i>Sustainability Pays</i> http://www.forumforthefuture.org.uk/publications/Sustainabilitypays_page712.aspx Midlothian Enterprise Trust <i>Success and Sustainability</i> http://www.che.ac.uk/publications/successandsustainability.pdf
Sustainability for higher education institutions			√		Forum for the Future <i>Reporting for Sustainability</i> http://www.forumforthefuture.org.uk/uploadstore/reporting.pdf
Sustainability for local planning authorities and other government agencies				√	ODPM <i>Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents</i> http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1161341 ODPM <i>A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive</i> http://www.odpm.gov.uk/embedded_object.asp?id=1143290
Assessing impacts on health			√	√	National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence <i>Health Impact Assessment Gateway</i> http://www.publichealth.nice.org.uk/page.aspx?o=503066
Assessing impacts on rural communities			√	√	Countryside Agency <i>What is Rural Proofing?</i> http://www.countryside.gov.uk/EssentialServices/ruralProofing/index.asp
Eco-audit, environmental audit	√	√	√	√	Environmental Management and Audit Scheme http://www.emas.org.uk

Related Approaches

Strategic environmental assessment (SEA) assesses the impacts of plans on the environment. It is legally required for certain plans and programmes under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. Information on SEA is given in the ODPM's *A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive*.

Sustainability Appraisal is legally required for local authority development plan documents, supplementary planning documents and regional spatial strategies under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. Information on joint SEA and Sustainability Appraisal is given in the ODPM's guide *Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents*.

Health impact assessment and **rural proofing** deal with impacts on particular groups of people (those with health problems, those in rural communities). The 'further information' list includes links to these types of appraisal, which are often integrated with Sustainability Appraisal.

Eco-audit or **environmental audit** tests an organisation's environmental impacts. It may lead to a certification, for instance Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) or ISO 14001.

SEA, SA Health impact assessment and proofing can all be combined in an integrated Sustainability Appraisal. Such an approach was adopted for the SA of the South East Plan and the RES.

Non Statutory Sustainability Appraisal

Development of an approach to Sustainability Appraisal for LSP's across the South East

In 2007, as part of the partnership improvement programme, a number of Local Strategic Partnerships came together to develop a pilot approach, using the RSF, to embed sustainable development into Sustainability Community Strategies and Local Area Agreements.

The training and workshops are ongoing but the partnerships are currently exploring ways of using the framework and available evidence to identify priority sustainable development objectives which can be used to test Sustainable Community Strategies.

Voluntary sector: Oxfam GB

Oxfam GB has a policy on operational sustainability. It covers employment conditions within Oxfam and its suppliers, use of energy on Oxfam premises, air and car travel, materials used to manufacture products, waste disposal and recycling, and relationship with local communities. Oxfam has set five performance indicators for these issues, each linked to a target. It will monitor whether these targets are being achieved.

http://www.oxfam.org.uk/about_us/suppliers/sustainability05.doc

Business: Abbott Laboratories Ltd.

Abbott Laboratories Ltd. is a health care company based in Queenborough (Kent). It appraised its waste and energy consumption, and set up a waste reduction and resource/energy efficiency initiative. It also provided training for its workers, and influenced its suppliers through its purchasing policy.

Due to these actions, it now recycles 50% of its waste, and in 2004 reduced its energy consumption by about 10%, saving £69,000. It also improved its overall operational efficiency, in some areas by 50%.

http://www.seeda.co.uk/Publications/Sustainable_Development/docs/Sustainable_Business_Awards/2004/Abbott-LaboratoriesLtd.pdf

Public sector: University of Edinburgh

The University of Edinburgh has had an environmental policy since 1993 and a sustainability policy since 2000. It has a dedicated office that checks whether environmental and sustainability legislation is complied with, and that appraises and monitors the university's activities. It has policies on energy efficiency, utilities, transport, and waste management.

As a result, since 1990, the university's energy costs have been cut by 5% despite a doubling in student numbers; waste management costs have gone down every year; the university recycles 21% of its waste; a burst underground water main was discovered because of the monitoring of water consumption; and a university travel plan has been put in place.

<http://www.eso.ed.ac.uk/PoliciesAndReports/>

Sustainability Appraisal under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

For those authorities that must carry out Sustainability Appraisal under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, South East-specific issues to consider when carrying out such appraisals are:

Identifying other relevant policies, plans and programmes, and sustainability objectives (Task A1 in the ODPM guidance): See the ‘Compendium of Regional Context Part of the Regional Sustainability Framework 2006’.

Collecting baseline information (Task A2): Useful baseline data for the region can be found at:

- South East England Intelligence Network, <http://www.see-in.co.uk>
- South East England Regional Assembly monitoring reports: <http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/publications/monitoring.html>
- South East Public Health Observatory: <http://www.sepho.org.uk/>
- Regional Quality of Life Counts: <http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk> (regularly updated)
- Audit Commission area profiles: <http://www.areaprofiles.audit-commission.gov.uk>

Identifying sustainability issues and problems (Task A3): The following regional-level problems relating to the spatial development of the South East region were identified in the Sustainability Appraisal of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East, the ‘South East Plan’. They may set a context for, and may also affect more local plans:

At regional level	In some sub-regional or local areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing supply, particularly a shortage of affordable housing which prevents ‘key workers’ and the low paid from living/working in many parts of the region • Access and transport, addressing problems of access without placing further pressure on the region’s stressed transport infrastructure • Resource consumption and associated problems, particularly in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Climate change and energy use, achieving targets for greenhouse gas reductions ○ Waste management ○ Water usage and resources, ensuring that increasing demand for water can be controlled and provided for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flooding and flood zones • Poverty and social exclusion, and regeneration • Land use, providing new houses and employment land etc on derelict and vacant land in urban areas, rather than using green field sites • Biodiversity • Countryside and the historic environment

Developing the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) framework (Task A4): The Regional Sustainability Framework provides a useful basis for developing the SA framework.

Regional Authorities - Sustainability Appraisal of the Draft South East Plan and the Regional Economic Strategy

Since 2004 the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (SEA) has required an assessment of the environmental implications of plans and programmes within the UK. In the UK the requirements of the SEA directive have been incorporated into the Sustainability Appraisal process which assesses the performance of plans in sustainability terms. The IRF set out a Sustainability Appraisal process and framework which has been applied to both the South East Plan and the Regional Economic Strategies.

An integrated approach was adopted that met the requirements of the SEA directive, Sustainability Appraisal, Health Impact Assessments and types of proofing including Rural Proofing.

<http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/southeastplan/key/sustainability.html>

http://www.seeda.co.uk/Publications/Regional_Economic_Strategy/

Local Authorities

Since 2004 Sustainability Appraisal's have been carried out across the South East as part of the Local Development Framework (LDF process). A list of Sustainability Appraisal's including those that have been carried as part of the LDF process can be found at:

<http://www.levett-therivel.fsworld.co.uk/> - under recommended strategic environmental assessment / sustainability appraisal reports 2006

Basingstoke and Dean Borough Council

Basingstoke has had a Sustainability Appraisal system in place since 1998. This was updated in June 2003 at a workshop to test a draft Sustainability Appraisal tool, which reflected the themes of the community strategy and council priorities. An updated version was then tested with members against a draft procurement strategy. They also used it as a basis for a newly formed street care team and discussions with the voluntary sector.

The appraisal has acted as a powerful mechanism to re-focus thinking about a range of outcomes, balancing national and local priorities and has generated much discussion. It is also being used to inform strategies and officers have been using it to scope projects.

The tool is part of a larger toolkit to engage and embed corporate priorities. Work has begun on developing an electronic version which produces two graphs – one showing results against corporate priorities, and another results against the community strategy.

http://www.southeast-ra.gov.uk/our_work/planning/sus_dev/research_report-nov2004.pdf