



Walsall Council

**Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the
Walsall Site Allocations Development Plan Document (SAD)
Walsall Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP)**

**Stage One: Scoping
Stage Two: Options Appraisal**

Non-Technical Summary

May 2013



Walsall Planning 2026: Have Your Say

Consultation 22/04/2013 to 03/06/2013

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Introduction

This is a plain language summary of the first two stages of the sustainability appraisal (SA) of the Walsall Site Allocations Document (SAD) and Walsall Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAP).

The SAD and AAP will be **local plans** whose main purpose is to deliver the new homes, factories, shops, offices, transport facilities and other types of development proposed in Walsall in the Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS) 2011. They will contain policies for the use and development of land in Walsall Borough between now and 2026, and will identify sites to be developed with different land uses.

What is a Sustainability Appraisal (SA)?

By law, the Council must carry out a sustainability appraisal (SA) of a local plan while it is being prepared. A SA is an assessment of the effects of the plan on the environment, local communities and the economy. As well as this, the SAD and AAP will also require:

- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA);
- Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA); and
- Health Impact Assessment (HIA).

As there are significant overlaps between these and the SA, the requirements of all of them have been combined into a single assessment framework. This means that instead of carrying out four separate assessments, we only need to do one, which will cover all of the effects we need to identify.

Another assessment, called the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is also being carried out at the same time. This considers the impacts of the SAD and AAP on nature conservation sites of international importance. This type of assessment has to be done in a different way, so it is separate, but the SA will take account of it.

SA of Walsall SAD and AAP – Key Stages

The SA is carried out in stages, as the plans develop. This allows us to identify potential problems early on, and gives us a chance to change the proposals or identify other ways of dealing with negative effects. The appraisals of the SAD and AAP will be progressed in nine stages, as set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Walsall SAD and AAP – SA Stages

SAD & AAP Stage	SA Stage	SA Reports
1. Evidence Gathering	1. Scoping	SA Scoping Report
2. Issues & Options	2. Options Appraisal	Options Appraisal Report
3. Draft SAD and AAP (Preferred Options)	3. Appraisal of Draft Plan (Preferred Options)	Interim SA Report
4. Publication	4. Appraisal of Final Plan	Final SA Report
5. Submission	5. Appraisal of Significant Changes	Supplementary SA Report (if necessary)
6. Examination	6. Appraisal	Supplementary SA Report (if necessary)
7. Inspector's Report	7. Review Inspector's Recommendations	N/A
8. Adoption	8. Adoption	SA Adoption Statement
9. Monitoring and Implementation	9. Monitoring of Significant Effects	Annual Monitoring Report

The results of the appraisals carried out at each stage process will be published in SA Reports. These reports will include a summary of the effects identified, and the implications of the appraisal results for the SAD and AAP. As they are produced, all SA documents will be made available to the public on the Council's website.

Stages 1 and 2 of the SA have already been completed, and the results are summarised below. Further details can be found in the Revised SA Scoping Report and Options Appraisal Report, which were published in April 2013, at the same time as the SAD and AAP Issues & Options Reports.

Walsall SAD and AAP – Overall Approach to SA

By law, the SA has to consider the “reasonable alternatives” for a new local plan. This means that as we prepare the SAD and AAP, we must identify all the **options**, such as how much development we need and where it should go within Walsall Borough, and we must appraise all of the realistic options we identify.

The overall pattern of development – the “spatial strategy” – has already been decided by the BCCS. The BCCS has also set targets for provision of housing and employment land and for development in Walsall Town Centre. These are fixed points, and it would not be “reasonable” for the SAD and AAP to go against them. The BCCS was subject to a SA, which predicted that the scale and pattern of development would mostly have positive effects on sustainability.

We do not have to appraise options that are not “reasonable,” or repeat appraisals that have already been carried out on other plans. The Council will therefore not appraise options it does not consider “reasonable,” and will not appraise options that are consistent with the BCCS “spatial strategy,” unless there is evidence they could have effects that have not been appraised before.

The options appraisal does not go into detail, but as the SAD and AAP develop the assessments will become more focused. We will carry out a more detailed appraisal of options, policies and proposals predicted to have **significant harmful effects**. The SA will also consider **mitigation** – how we could prevent, minimise or compensate for harmful effects, or improve existing conditions where problems already exist. Finally, the SA will identify ways of **monitoring** the significant effects predicted, once the SAD and AAP are adopted, to see how effective they are.

At each stage in the SA, the results will help the Council to decide between the alternative options it has identified, and decide the final content of the SAD and AAP, including the sites that should be allocated for development, and the sites that should be protected or safeguarded.

The SA Framework

Appendix 1 provides an overview of the **SA framework** that will be used to appraise the SAD and AAP. The complete framework can be found in Appendix G of the Revised SA Scoping Report (April 2013).

The framework is structured around fourteen **SA Objectives**. These were identified during the scoping stage, which considered the objectives of existing plans, policies and programmes, current sustainability conditions in Walsall, and the issues that the SAD and AAP need to deal with, as is explained below.

The SA Objectives have been “tested” against each other to check for consistency. The only areas of conflict are between SA Objective 10, which aims to maintain mineral supplies, and SA Objectives 3, 9 and 12, which aim to protect the natural environment and landscape, and to prevent further problems with ground conditions.

Linked to each SA Objective are Criteria and Indicators to guide the appraisal process. The Criteria are in the form of questions, to prompt the assessors to consider the how the options and proposals for the plan will affect each SA Objective. The Indicators point to background information and trends identified in the review of evidence which could be relevant.

The SA process involves checking whether each option, policy or proposal is likely to have positive, negative, neutral or uncertain effects on each of the SA Objectives. Where positive or negative effects are identified, we also have to consider how significant they would be. The SA is recorded in a table – **the SA matrix** - where the predicted effects on the SA Objectives are shown by symbols and colours.

SA Stage 1: Scoping

Existing Plans, Policies and Programmes

The first stage of scoping is to consider what existing plans, policies and programmes say about sustainability, and how this affects the SAD and AAP.

For example, the SAD and AAP will have to comply with **European Directives** and **UK legislation** on the environment, such as air quality, the natural environment, renewable energy, waste management and water. A large (and growing) number of **national policy** documents on economic, environmental and social issues, and on the preparation of local plans, also have to be complied with.

Below these, there are plans such as the **Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS) 2012** which set the framework for development in Walsall. Other important plans for Walsall and the surrounding area include the **West Midlands Local Transport Plan (LTP3)**, which identifies key transport projects to be developed up to 2026, such as improvements to the railway network and the Darlaston Strategic Development Area (DSDA) Access Project.

At a local level, **Walsall Council's Corporate Plan 2011/12 – 2013/14** has identified communities and neighbourhoods, the economy, and health and well-being as the main priorities for Walsall Borough. The Council and NHS Walsall have also produced the **Walsall Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)**, setting out the main priorities for health and social care, and the actions needed to deal with current health problems. The community strategy for Walsall is being revised in the light of these priorities, and they will also need to be taken on board in the SAD and AAP.

Current Sustainability Conditions in Walsall

Another thing we have to do at the early stage of the SA is to establish the “baseline” conditions. This means reviewing the evidence we have on the environmental, social and economic issues affecting Walsall. We have now done this and the following

sections provide a summary of current conditions. Establishing a “baseline” helps us to understand the issues the SAD and AAP will have to deal with, and also helps us to identify the sources of evidence we could use to monitor changes over time.

Environmental Conditions

Walsall has important mineral resources. The western areas of the borough overlie the South Staffordshire Coalfield, and to the east is a band of sand and gravel running north-south beneath Great Barr, Streetly and Aldridge. We also have limestone in and around the Town Centre, a hard black rock called dolerite at Pouk Hill, and brick clay in Stubbers Green and Shelfield. The extraction of these minerals in the past, particularly coal and limestone, has had a major influence over the pattern of development in different parts of the borough.

Walsall's canals, railway lines, historic town centres, industrial buildings and older housing areas are important features of its character. Walsall also has a lot of natural greenspace, including some sites which are protected because of their importance for nature conservation. The Cannock Extension Canal is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) of international importance, because it supports a rare plant called floating water plantain. At the moment, the main threats to Walsall's historic and natural environment are loss through redevelopment, and gradual changes which affect character, such as inappropriate management, neglect, vandalism, and arson, which has led to the loss of several listed buildings in the Town Centre. The sites most at risk include nature conservation sites of local importance, listed buildings and conservation areas in the Town Centre, and Great Barr Hall and Park.

Parts of Walsall are affected by other environmental problems. In Darlaston, Willenhall, the Town Centre and Rushall, some sites are affected by contamination and unstable ground. A harmful pollutant called nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) - caused mainly by road traffic - is also affecting air quality in the M6 corridor, including Junction 10, roads connecting to it, and part of the Ring Road around the Town Centre. Water quality is also being affected by development, mostly from discharge of waste water into watercourses and pollution from surface water run-off. Walsall

has a lot of facilities for recycling and recovery of waste, but there are gaps in provision, for example, we have no facilities for composting or energy recovery.

Nearly all businesses and households in Walsall rely on non-renewable gas and electricity supplies. Generating energy from these sources produces a lot of carbon dioxide (CO₂), which is the main “greenhouse gas” contributing to climate change. A recent regional study has found that there is not much scope to reduce emissions by generating electricity from renewable and low carbon sources in Walsall. However, there may be some potential to generate electricity from “biomass” (including waste) and from wind power, and potential to make more efficient use of energy through a “district” heat, power and cooling scheme in the Town Centre.

Some areas of the borough are at risk of flooding, which is likely to become more of a problem due to climate change. Land near the River Tame, Ford Brook, Sneyd Brook (including culverts and tunnels) is most at risk, in particular, parts of the Town Centre, parts of Darlaston, and the Willenhall area. Other possible effects of climate change that could affect Walsall include “heat island effects” - the tendency for built-up areas to be hotter than their rural surroundings. Seasonal drought could also affect nature conservation areas, other open spaces and agricultural land, and may also affect water supplies in the long-term.

Economic Conditions

Most business activity in Walsall is happening in the established employment areas, of which the most important are Darlaston, Pleck, Wednesbury, Willenhall, Bloxwich, Aldridge and Brownhills. Walsall Town Centre is also a major focus for economic activity, and contains the most important concentration of shops and commercial leisure facilities in the borough.

Walsall’s economic base is still largely dependent on traditional manufacturing industry, which is now in decline, although there has been a modest upturn in manufacturing during the last few years. However, there has been no growth in jobs in Walsall during the last fifteen years, because the service sectors are not well represented and have not expanded enough to replace the manufacturing jobs that

have been lost. The waste management sector is well represented, and the mineral extraction sector also still has a presence, but they are not major employers. The relatively low level of skills among the working population is one factor likely to be affecting economic performance.

Walsall's unemployment rate is higher than the national and regional average and wages are lower. However, economic conditions are not the same in all parts of the borough. The highest concentrations of unemployment and low incomes are found in south Willenhall, Bloxwich and central Walsall, which also tend to have the highest concentrations of environmental and social problems (see above and below). By contrast, the areas with the highest levels of employment and high incomes are found in north Bloxwich, Aldridge, and Streetly which are also the parts of the borough with the fewest environmental and social problems.

The shortage of employment land available for development makes it more difficult to attract economic investment into the borough. The quality and location of the land available is also an issue, for example, many sites are known or suspected to have problems with ground conditions. Although there are policies in the BCCS to control changes of use of employment land, some of the borough's best employment sites have recently come under pressure for redevelopment with housing. Traffic congestion and poor links between the borough's main employment areas and the motorway network have also been identified as barriers to economic growth, and action is being taken to improve this through projects such as the Darlaston Strategic Development Area (DSDA) Access Project.

The health of Walsall Town Centre is also cause for concern. It has relatively high vacancy rates and low rental values compared to other centres of similar status, and there is evidence that it is attracting fewer visitors. The main factors affecting the Town Centre's health are the range and choice of facilities available (for example, there is no cinema or major venue for the performing arts), competition from larger and stronger centres such as Birmingham and Wolverhampton, and competition from large-scale out-of-centre retail and leisure developments. Because of this the Town Centre has struggled to attract investment in recent years, and this has probably contributed to the risks to listed buildings and conservation areas.

Social Conditions

Walsall Borough has a population of just over a quarter of a million people. The latest Census information indicates that the population is growing, although the number of households is not expected to increase beyond the levels anticipated in the BCCS. The population is diverse: black people and people of minority ethnic origin currently make up around 17% of the population, and Walsall also has a higher proportion of children, older people, and people with long-term illness or disability, than the national and regional average.

Walsall has some of the worst indicators of health in the country. For example, in Walsall, life expectancy is lower than the national average, whereas the proportion of people with long-term illness and disability is higher, rates of coronary and respiratory disorders are higher, and the proportion of obese adults and children is also higher. There are also differences in the pattern of health in different ethnic groups, as people from South Asian and African Caribbean backgrounds have higher rates of diabetes, strokes and coronary heart disease than white communities. The Walsall JSNA has identified poverty, unemployment, education, environmental conditions, and unhealthy lifestyles as contributory factors.

There are major differences in health and social conditions in different parts of the borough. The main areas of deprivation are generally the more densely populated and urbanised western and central areas, which generally have the highest concentrations of non-decent and overcrowded homes, less open space, more derelict land, greater exposure to air pollution and noise, and higher levels of unemployment and poor health. On the other hand, these areas are better connected to public transport networks, jobs, shops, schools and health care facilities than the more prosperous eastern areas.

There is evidence that poverty and poor health are affecting some groups more than others. For example, many black and minority ethnic people, families with children and people with long-term illness live in areas where there are concentrations of

unemployment, overcrowded housing, and health problems. Young people are also more likely to be unemployed than older people of working age. The supply of affordable homes and special needs homes is also not sufficient to meet current or future needs, and there are not enough pitches and plots for gypsies, travellers and travelling show-people.

Likely Evolution of Sustainability Conditions

Having summarised the current “baseline” conditions, we then have to use the evidence we have gathered to predict how things might change over the plan period without the SAD and AAP. The evidence suggests that if we do not prepare the SAD and AAP, conditions will develop in the following ways:

- If planning permissions on brownfield sites do not provide enough housing and employment land to meet the BCCS requirements, there is likely to be pressure for more housing to be developed on employment land and for housing and employment development on greenfield sites;
- Any environmental improvements that take place are likely to be very localised, and positive effects will probably be minimal compared to the benefits of a more co-ordinated approach;
- Existing environmental problems could be made worse if development takes place in unsuitable locations, such as areas at risk from localised flooding not identified as being at risk in the BCCS;
- Nature conservation sites and historic sites of local importance are likely to be more vulnerable to loss due to pressure for redevelopment, which could affect greenfield land or historic buildings, or erosion of quality due to lack of investment in maintenance, if the economy continues to decline;

- There is a greater risk of further damage to areas already affected by a range of environmental problems, due to piecemeal development that does not consider the combined effects;
- The borough will be more vulnerable to the effects of climate change if we cannot identify sites where renewable energy facilities and measures to cope with the effects (such as flood management) can be developed;
- The borough's economy is likely to suffer because the supply of employment land in Walsall will continue to decline, meaning that local businesses may have to close or relocate elsewhere, opportunities for new investment will be lost, and more jobs will also be lost;
- The Town Centre is likely to continue to decline, because shopping, office and leisure developments are likely to take place in a piecemeal manner, and in places outside the centre;
- Planned transport improvement projects in the Town Centre and elsewhere in the borough are less likely to happen, because they could be compromised by other development on land needed for these projects;
- Communities and businesses in Walsall are less likely to have access to more affordable and reliable sources of energy, if we do not identify sites suitable for "district" heating schemes or renewable energy generation;
- Housing conditions for some people in Walsall are likely to become worse, because fewer affordable homes and homes for people who need special accommodation, such as gypsies and travellers, will be provided;
- Competition for land is likely to make it more difficult to develop new schools, health care facilities, open spaces and other community facilities in suitable locations if we cannot identify sites for them.

Areas Significantly Affected by Sustainability Conditions

We are also required to consider which areas are already being affected by significant environmental, social and economic problems, or where they might happen in the future if we did not prepare the SAD and AAP. The baseline evidence tells us that Walsall is already affected by a range of economic, social and economic problems. Some of these are affecting the borough as a whole, whereas others are having more localised effects on particular areas. Existing plans, policies and programmes are also controlling the effects of new development to an extent.

For example, the environmental effects of new developments are already controlled to a large extent through national policy and local policies in the BCCS and UDP, which aim to prevent unacceptable harm. However, even with these policies in place, localised negative effects are still possible, depending on the type of development, the environmental importance of the location, and how vulnerable it is to damage. There is also potential for harmful effects if development takes place on “greenfield” land. This could happen in the future if there is not enough brownfield land in Walsall to meet the housing and employment requirements identified in the BCCS.

Although the BCCS proposes a sustainable pattern of development, some development in Walsall is expected to take place outside the main urban areas. If this is allowed to happen in more dispersed locations, remote from transport links, it will have significant negative effects on accessibility, as would development that would hinder delivery of key transport projects identified in the BCCS and West Midlands LTP3. The main effects would be felt by people who do not have access to a car, who are concentrated in the central, southern and western parts of the borough. It could also undermine objectives to improve air quality in areas affected by pollution, as it would encourage more road transport.

The “baseline” evidence shows that Walsall’s economy is already weak. This is already having significant negative effects on the health and quality of life of many of the people living in the central, southern and western parts of the borough, including black and minority ethnic people and people with disabilities who live mainly in these areas. The situation is not helped by the shortage of employment land. If more

employment land is redeveloped with housing than the BCCS assumes, the economy will decline further, as more businesses and jobs will be lost or will move out of the urban areas. People living in the central, southern and western parts of the borough would be particularly badly affected by this, as they are less likely to have access to a car and are more dependent on employment in the borough.

The BCCS proposes that most shopping, office and leisure development should take place in the Town Centre, which is the most accessible place in the borough, being well connected by train or bus to most parts of the borough. Improvements to transport facilities, including the railway station and bus station, are also proposed. Some of these improvements aim to tackle congestion and improve bus circulation in the Town Centre, which is one of the main factors contributing to poor air quality. If these improvements happen, they would have significant positive effects on the Town Centre as well as on the borough as a whole.

If these investments do not take place, the Town Centre will decline further. This would have significant negative effects on the borough's economy, on access to key facilities and services, and possibly also on air quality, as it is likely to encourage shopping, offices and leisure facilities to be developed in locations only accessible by car. People are also less likely to want to invest in the Town Centre, leading to further erosion of character and loss of important buildings.

Walsall does not exist in a bubble, so development in the borough has the potential to affect other areas. For example, the air quality problems identified above are not just happening in Walsall, so action is being taken by all of the authorities in the West Midlands to reduce harmful air pollution across the whole of the metropolitan area. This means that action taken to reduce emissions in Walsall is likely to have positive effects on neighbouring areas, and vice versa.

Other changes that could affect areas outside the borough include developments affecting nature conservation sites and other open spaces near to the borough boundary which could be used by people and wildlife outside the area, increases in housing growth beyond what is proposed in the BCCS, new housing development to

the borough boundary which could put pressure on services in other areas or may bring benefits from new jobs.

SA Stage 2: Options Appraisal

The first stage of plan development is identifying the objectives of the SAD and AAP, the key issues they need to look at, and the options available. Having done this, we have to carry out the second stage of SA, which is in two parts:

- **Objectives Testing** - checking that the objectives for the SAD and AAP are compatible with the SA Objectives; and
- **Options Appraisal** - identifying and assessing all of the “reasonable” options identified for the SAD and AAP.

In April 2013, the Council published an Issues & Options Report on each plan, setting out the plan objectives and the issues and options identified so far. The results of the SA carried out are summarised below. Further details can be found in the Options Appraisal Report (April 2013).

Objectives Testing

Ten objectives have been identified for each plan. These have been developed from the vision, sustainability principles and objectives of the BCCS, and out of the objectives identified for Walsall in other local plans, policies and programmes. The objectives for the SAD and AAP have been tested against the SA Objectives for the SAD and AAP. The findings are summarised below.

The SAD and AAP objectives are generally very compatible with the SA Objectives, in particular, SAD Objective 5 and AAP Objectives 8, 9 and 10 complement SA Objectives 2, 3, 5 and 9, as all of these objectives aim to deliver environmental improvements. However, the following conflicts have been identified:

- Objectives to retain Local Quality employment land, and objectives to improve the sustainability of buildings and resilience to climate change (SAD Objective 2 and SA Objectives 3, 4, 11 and 12);
- Objectives to allow limited mineral extraction where needed to support economic growth, and objectives to protect and enhance the environment (SAD Objectives 6 and 10 and SA Objectives 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 10, 13 and 14);
- Objectives to deliver a high quality transport network, and objectives to reduce harmful air pollution and carbon dioxide emissions (AAP Objective 7 and SA Objectives 1 and 3).

There is also uncertainty about the relationships between the objectives in some cases, for example, where SAD or AAP objectives could have different impacts on the SA Objectives, depending on how and where they are put into effect.

SAD and AAP Options Appraisal

Each of the SAD and AAP Options has been subjected to a “high level” appraisal, as explained above. The results of this suggest that most of the Options we have identified are likely to have positive or neutral effects on the SA Objectives.

Where **significant** effects have been identified, in most cases they are positive, particularly the Options for the AAP. In general, the Options that have scored positively against the SA Objectives are promoting patterns of land use and development in accordance with the BCCS, and those that have scored negatively are promoting more dispersed patterns of development, which are likely to increase journeys and dependence on the car.

Appendix 1 lists the SAD Options that the appraisal identifies as having significant positive or negative effects, and the SAD Options whose effects are uncertain. The types of significant effects identified are summarised in Table 3 below.

Table 3: SAD Options – Potential Significant Effects Identified

Significant Positive Effects	Significant Negative Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial development on previously-developed land, which is likely to use land most efficiently; • Improved provision of open space in areas of deficiency; • Improved access to natural greenspace and the historic environment; • Set local targets for development of more waste recycling facilities; • Safeguard all existing waste management facilities; • Provide guidance on suitable locations for new waste management facilities; • Provide guidance on areas with mineral resources in Walsall and areas where mineral extraction could take place; • Safeguard land needed for planned transport projects; • Allocate sites suitable for development of new renewable energy facilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing and industrial development and mineral extraction on greenfield sites, which would lead to loss of open land and sites of importance for biodiversity; • Housing and industrial development outside the built-up areas of the borough, which are likely to increase car dependency and the distance people need to travel to work, shop or for leisure; • Housing and industrial development likely to increase the amount of traffic on the roads, which would in turn increase emissions of harmful air pollutants.

Appendix 2 indicates which of the AAP Options would have significant positive effects, significant negative effects and uncertain effects. The types of significant effects identified are summarised in Table 4 below.

Table 4: AAP Options – Potential Significant Effects Identified

Significant Positive Effects	Significant Negative Effects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate sites for housing, health care and education provision in the Town Centre, which is the most accessible location in the borough; • Set standards for quality of residential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smaller Town Centre boundary, which could to lead to over-intensive development in the core of the centre; • Leisure and entertainment policies that are unlikely to deliver the key facilities the

<p>environments in the Town Centre, to safeguard the amenity of residents;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pro-active approach towards design, maintaining character and conserving the historic environment, identifying design principles and areas where investment will be targeted; • Pro-active approach towards investment, identifying sites and areas where investment will be targeted and land uses likely to deliver most benefits; • Pro-active approach towards sustainable use of resources and climate change mitigation and adaptation, setting minimum environmental standards and requirements for surface water management. 	<p>borough currently lacks.</p>
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The appraisal has also identified **uncertain effects** which could be significant, but at the moment we don't have enough information to form a view. For example, where options are not site-specific, we cannot tell how they would affect the SA Objectives concerned with protecting the natural and built environment, managing flood risk, and avoiding further harm to soils or water quality. The constraints of developing some types of site also create uncertainties about whether some objectives could be met. In addition, there are uncertainties about how the market might react to some of the options we have identified, particularly for the AAP.

As the plans progress, we expect to develop the options in more detail, and we should be able to predict the effects of each option with greater certainty. This will help the Council decide its "preferred options," which will include identifying sites proposed for development and sites proposed to be protected.

The SA has also identified possible measures that could be put into place to deal with negative effects or make the most of opportunities for improvement that might arise. These include choosing options most likely to be beneficial or least likely to

cause harm, and including policies in the SAD and AAP to control harmful effects on particular sites or areas, or to improve conditions in areas where problems exist.

Some options identified have not been subjected to SA at this stage, because they are not considered “reasonable.” These options are appended to the Options Appraisal Report, with reasons given as to why they are not reasonable options.

Public Consultation

Public consultation is an important requirement of the SA and SEA process. The SA reports prepared at each stage in the preparation of a local plan must be published alongside the emerging proposals for the plan. The public must be given the opportunity to comment on both the plan and the appraisal.

We have therefore published all the SA reports on the Council’s website, which is available to the public in all Council Libraries, and a copy of this summary has been placed in the First Stop Shop in the Civic Centre for public inspection. People can comment on the SA online, or can add their comments in the first section of the “Have your Say” Response Forms. For further details please visit the “Planning 2026” page of the Council website – here is a link:

http://cms.walsall.gov.uk/index/environment/planning/planning_policy/planning_2026.htm

Planning authorities also have a “**duty to co-operate**” with each other and with other organisations when local plans are prepared, so that there is consistency, and so that possible effects on other areas are taken into account. The Council will therefore be talking to these organisations about issues that might affect them, throughout the process.

Appendix 1

SA of Walsall SAD and AAP – Overview of SA Framework: SA Topics, Objectives and Criteria

SA Topics	Relevant SEA Topics	SA Objectives	SA Criteria and Indicators
1: Air Quality	Air Climatic Factors Human Health	Minimise emissions of potentially harmful air pollutants from new development in Walsall and exposure to poor air quality in the parts of Walsall Borough where the national air quality objectives for NO ₂ are not being met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are options likely to generate significant levels of NO₂ into the atmosphere? • Are options likely to generate significant amounts of other pollutants? • Do options involve uses likely to be harmed by exposure to high levels of NO₂ (e.g. in areas where limit values are already exceeded)?
2: Biodiversity and Geodiversity	Biodiversity Flora Fauna Landscape	Conserve, protect, enhance and restore Walsall's biodiversity and geodiversity by ensuring that new development does not harm the integrity of European Sites or cause further loss of designated sites or other important wildlife habitats and geological features, and by identifying opportunities for new habitat creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will options affect protected species? • How will options affect European Sites and other sites designated for their national or local importance for biodiversity or geodiversity? • How will options affect other important wildlife habitats such as priority habitats identified in the BAP, or geological features? • How will options contribute towards the BCCS "environmental infrastructure network," such as the inclusion and protection inclusion of natural greenspace?
3: Climate Change	Air Climatic Factors Material Assets Water	Minimise Walsall's contribution towards climate change and adapt to the unavoidable effects of climate change on the Borough, by promoting low carbon/ low emission developments and by identifying opportunities to mitigate the anticipated effects on key infrastructure and other important assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are options likely to generate significant levels of CO₂ or other "greenhouse gases"? • How will options impact on vulnerability of existing or proposed infrastructure and development to the unavoidable effects of climate change? • How will options contribute towards the BCCS "environmental infrastructure network," such as inclusion of environmental assets likely to improve resilience to climate change effects?

SA Topics	Relevant SEA Topics	SA Objectives	SA Criteria and Indicators
4: Communities and Population	Population Material Assets	Support the development of strong, sustainable and inclusive communities in Walsall by developing high quality housing that reflects local housing needs in attractive locations that are accessible to employment and social infrastructure, and by ensuring that other new developments will have a positive effect on the quality of life for local communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are options likely to improve the attractiveness of Walsall as a place to live, encouraging people to stay or move into the area? • How will options affect the amenity, quality of life and wellbeing of existing local communities? • Are options likely to help reduce poverty and deprivation affecting the western and central parts of the Borough? • Will options help to deliver high quality market and affordable housing to meet BCCS requirements, particularly in areas of local housing need? • Will options help to deliver housing in locations that meet BCCS and UDP standards for accessibility to jobs, shops, open spaces and other essential social infrastructure?
5: Cultural Heritage	Cultural Heritage, including architectural and archaeological heritage Landscape	Conserve, protect and enhance Walsall's cultural heritage by encouraging better management of conservation areas and historic parks and gardens, by identifying appropriate, viable and beneficial uses for vacant historic buildings, and by ensuring that new development does not compromise the quality or character of heritage assets and their settings or destroy features or archaeology of national or local importance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are options likely to enhance and/ or encourage better management of conservation areas, particularly those areas on the "at risk" register? • Are options likely to help conserve buildings of architectural or historic interest, including Great Barr Hall which is "at risk," and other vacant/ derelict historic buildings, by identifying appropriate and viable new uses for them? • Are options likely to encourage appropriate management of historic parks and gardens, including Great Barr Park which is "at risk"? • How will options affect archaeological sites/ remains, including Scheduled Monuments and other sites identified on the Black Country HERS? • How will options contribute towards the BCCS "environmental infrastructure network," such as the inclusion and protection of important heritage assets and their settings?

SA Topics	Relevant SEA Topics	SA Objectives	SA Criteria and Indicators
<p>6: Economy and Centres</p>	<p>Population Material Assets</p>	<p>Promote sustainable, low carbon economic growth and retain businesses and jobs in Walsall by identifying and safeguarding sufficient land for employment and training of the right quality in accessible locations to meet the needs of local businesses and potential investors, and by identifying opportunities for retail, office and leisure development in centres to meet anticipated requirements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will options support business growth, investment and job retention or creation within the Borough, particularly in sectors not currently well represented? • How will options improve access to education and vocational training for the local workforce, particularly young people? • How will options affect BCCS requirements for provision of readily available employment land suitable for development with B1b, B1c, B2 and B8 uses? • How will options impact directly on the environment and on the amenity, health and well-being of local communities from air pollution, noise and other potential nuisances? • How will options help local businesses to diversify and move towards a sustainable, low carbon economy? • How will options support the delivery and retention of “town centre” uses of an appropriate type and scale in the Centre and Local Centres, including the delivery of the BCCS requirements for new comparison shopping and office floorspace in the Town Centre?
<p>7: Equality and Diversity</p>	<p>Population Material Assets</p>	<p>Reduce inequality by ensuring that the diverse needs of communities in Walsall are considered when planning housing and other developments to be used by the public, by ensuring that specific needs are addressed where possible, by supporting development that would help reduce poverty and social and economic deprivation, and by improving access to key services and facilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are options likely to have different impacts on people with "protected characteristics," compared to people in general? • How will options help to deliver the BCCS caravan pitch requirements for gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople, and other special housing requirements identified in local housing needs assessments? • How will options help to reduce inequality, poverty and social and economic deprivation for local communities, particularly communities with a high proportion of vulnerable groups? • How will options promote inclusive communities by ensuring that any new jobs, shops, open spaces and social infrastructure provided are accessible to all people living in the communities they are meant to serve?

SA Topics	Relevant SEA Topics	SA Objectives	SA Criteria and Indicators
8: Health and Wellbeing	Human Health Population	Improve the health and well-being of Walsall residents and address health inequalities by ensuring that new development supports healthy lifestyles and wellbeing and does not present unacceptable risks to health, and by ensuring that health and social care facilities are accessible to those they are meant to serve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are options likely to affect the general health and well-being of Walsall residents, particularly in parts of the Borough where there are high levels of health problems? • Are options likely to increase risks to human health from existing hazards, or from potential new hazards? • Are options likely to encourage healthy and active lifestyles by improving access to sport and recreational facilities or incorporating opportunities for walking and cycling? • Are options likely to ensure that health and social care facilities are accessible to the people they are meant to serve?
9: Landscape and Townscape	Landscape	Conserve, protect and enhance the landscape and townscape by developing an environmental infrastructure network for Walsall that protects valued areas and provides opportunities to improve areas of lesser quality, and by ensuring that new development is well designed, of a type and scale appropriate to its surroundings, and respects the character of buildings, spaces and other features where they contribute positively to the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are options likely to adversely affect the openness and permanence of the Green Belt? • How will options contribute towards the BCCS “environmental infrastructure network,” such as the inclusion and protection of locally valued areas of landscape and townscape? • Are options likely to contribute positively towards landscape and townscape, by respecting and enhancing locally distinctive buildings, features and spaces, or improving areas where the landscape or townscape is of poor quality?
10: Material Resources	Material Assets	Use Walsall’s material resources prudently and efficiently and in ways that will protect the environment and human health, by safeguarding mineral resources and mineral and waste infrastructure, by addressing identified mineral supply requirements, and by supporting proposals likely to reduce waste and provide the infrastructure needed to manage unavoidable waste arising in Walsall in ways that will make optimum use of resources and divert as much as possible away from landfill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are options likely to affect mineral resources and mineral and waste infrastructure, including infrastructure for bulk transport of materials by rail? • How are options likely to maintain supplies of mineral resources needed to support the local economy and contribute towards sub-regional requirements? • Are options likely to minimise waste and facilitate management of unavoidable waste arising in Walsall in ways that will divert as much waste away from landfill as possible and optimise the use of resource?

SA Topics	Relevant SEA Topics	SA Objectives	SA Criteria and Indicators
10: Material Resources (cont.)	See above	See above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are options likely to help deliver the BCCS waste management infrastructure requirements or meet other local requirements for waste management infrastructure? • Are options likely to address the potential harmful effects of mineral extraction and waste management on the environment, human health or the amenity of local communities?
11: Renewable and Low Carbon Energy	Climatic Factors Material Assets Population	Reduce Walsall's reliance on non-renewable, carbon based energy sources, by minimising energy consumption, by increasing the capacity available to generate energy and fuel from renewable and low carbon sources, and by delivering more affordable, secure and reliable supplies of energy to local communities and businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are options likely to help reduce Walsall's energy and fuel consumption, particularly from sources that generate significant CO₂ emissions such as housing, businesses and transport? • Are options likely to increase Walsall's capacity to generate energy and fuel from renewable and low carbon sources? • Are options likely to improve access to more affordable and reliable energy supplies for local households and businesses?
12: Soil and Ground Conditions	Material Assets Soil	Maintain and improve the quality of Walsall's soils and land, by encouraging development that uses land and buildings efficiently or brings previously developed and derelict land back into beneficial use, and by ensuring that new development deals with existing contamination and geotechnical problems and does not exacerbate existing problems or cause such problems on land not already affected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are options likely to affect the quality of soils and the ecosystems that depend on them? • Are options likely to affect agricultural land within Walsall, and if so, what effect would they have on the best and most versatile agricultural land? • Are options likely to make efficient use of land, such as re-use of previously-developed land and existing buildings? • Are options likely to increase risks to human health or the environment from existing contamination or geotechnical problems or by creating new problems?

SA Topics	Relevant SEA Topics	SA Objectives	SA Criteria and Indicators
13: Transport and Accessibility	Air Human Health Material Assets Population	Deliver the transport infrastructure required to improve connectivity, reduce congestion and support economic growth in Walsall, reduce the impacts of transport on the environment and on the amenity and well-being of local communities, and ensure that new employment and social infrastructure is accessible to local people by a choice of transport modes, and encourages them to make smarter and healthier transport choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are options likely to improve connectivity within Walsall and between Walsall and wider transport networks? • How are options likely to help reduce congestion on road and rail networks, for example, by improving the flow of traffic and efficiency of train services? • Are options likely to help mitigate the harmful effects of road and rail transport on the environment and on the amenity and well-being of local communities (e.g. air quality, noise, safety)? • Are options likely to improve the efficiency and sustainability of freight movements by enabling goods and services to be moved by rail or inland waterway? • Are options likely to encourage people to make smarter, healthier transport choices, such as using public transport or cycling and walking for shorter journeys? • Are options likely to provide jobs, shopping facilities and other key facilities and services in centres or in other locations accessible to the communities they are meant to serve by a choice of transport modes?
14: Water Environment	Material Assets Water	Conserve and protect Walsall's water resources, maintain water quality and reduce the risk of flooding, by minimising water consumption, by avoiding development in areas where water resources are present or areas at risk of flooding, by ensuring that new development will not have adverse impacts on hydrology and that any waste water generated can be managed in ways that minimise the risk of flooding and pollution of surface and groundwater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are options likely to require abstraction of significant quantities of water or increase water consumption? • How are options likely to affect important water resources (e.g. Primary Aquifers and Groundwater Source Protection Zones)? • How are options likely to affect the water quality status of Walsall's surface water bodies or groundwater, and are they likely to prevent further deterioration of water quality status? • Are options likely to increase the risk of flooding from drains, culverts or groundwater? • Are options in locations likely to be at risk of flooding, and if so, are the risks acceptable?

Appendix 2

SAD Options Appraisal – Options likely to have Significant or Uncertain Effects

SAD Topic Areas	Significant Positive Effects	Significant Negative Effects	Uncertain Effects
Housing	-	Housing Option 3	Housing Options 1 – 3
Land for Industry	Industry Option 2	Industry Option 4	Housing Options 3, 4
Shopping and Services	-	-	Local Centres Option 2
Open Space, Leisure and Community Services	Open Space Option 1 Environmental Network Option 2	-	Open Space Option 3 Community & Leisure Options 1, 2
Waste Management	Waste Recovery Options 1b, 1c Waste Infrastructure Option 2b Waste Locations Option 3b	-	Waste Recovery Option 1c Waste Locations 3a
Minerals	MSA Options 1a – 1c Mineral Allocations Option 5a	Brick Clay Supply Option 3b Fireclay Supply Options 4a – 4c	Brick Clay Options 3a – 3b Mineral Allocations Options 5a, 5b Mineral Impacts Options 6a, 6b
Land for Transport	Transport Option 1	-	-
Utilities Infrastructure	Utilities Infrastructure Option 1	-	Utilities Infrastructure Options 1, 2

Appendix 3

AAP Options Appraisal – Options likely to have Significant or Uncertain Effects

SAD Topic Areas	Significant Positive Effects	Significant Negative Effects	Uncertain Effects
Town Centre Boundary	-	Town Centre Boundary Option 1	Town Centre Boundary Options 2, 3
A Place for Shopping	-	-	Primary Shopping Area Options 2 - 4 Location of New Retail Option 3 Walsall Market Option 2
A Place for Business	-	-	Location of New Office Options 1 – 2 Industrial Uses Option 1
A Place for Leisure	-	Leisure Facilities Option 5	Leisure Facilities Options 3 – 5 Cultural & Community Options 1, 3, 5 Evening Economy Option 1 – 2 Overnight Accommodation Option 2 Canal Options 1 – 2 Location of Leisure Options 1 - 3
A Place for Living	Housing Option 1 Residential Environments Option 1 Education & Health Option 1 Character Options 1, 3 Design Options 3, 6	-	Housing Options 1 – 4 Residential Environments Options 1 – 2 Education & Health Options 1 – 2 Character Options 1 – 3 Conservation Options 1, 2, 5 Protected Views Options 1 – 2 Design Options 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 Public Realm Options 1 – 3 Linkages Options 1 – 3

SAD Topic Areas	Significant Positive Effects	Significant Negative Effects	Uncertain Effects
A Place for Living (continued)			Environmental Options 1 – 2
Transport, Movement & Accessibility	-	-	Pedestrianisation Options 1 – 3 Public Transport Options 1 - 4 Walsall Rail Station Options 1 – 2 Taxis Options 1 – 3 Coach Facilities Options 1 – 2 Road Network Options 1 - 2 Car Parking Options 1 – 5
A Place for Investment	Investment Options 1 – 5 Old Square Options 1 – 3 Shannon’s Mill Option 1 Gigaport Option 1 Waterfront North Option 1 Waterfront Lex Option 1 Park Street Options 1 - 2	-	Investment Options 1 – 5 Old Square Options 2 – 3 Shannon’s Mill Options 1 – 2 Gigaport Options 1 – 3 Waterfront North Options 1 – 2 Waterfront Lex Options 1 - 3 Park Street Options 1 - 2
The Sites	Flood Risk Management Option 1	-	Flood Risk Management Options 1 - 2