



Walsall Council

**Supplementary Planning Document
For Walsall Waterfront**

Sustainability Appraisal Report

8th November 2006

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) Matters

- Title of SPD:** Supplementary Planning Document for Walsall Waterfront.
- Subject:** This SPD expands on “saved” policy WA12 of the Walsall Unitary Development Plan regarding the development of the site known as Waterfront in Walsall town centre.
- Consultation:** Representations were made on the SPD and accompanying documents during two consultation periods from the 19th September to the 24th October 2005 and from the 1st September to the 2nd October 2006.
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- The relevant documents can be inspected on the Council’s website at www.walsall.gov.uk/index/environment/planning/local_development_framework.htm or during normal opening hours at the First Stop Shop in Walsall Civic Centre and at public libraries in the Borough of Walsall.
- Adoption:** The SPD was adopted by Walsall Council at its Cabinet meeting on the 8th November 2006.

Supplementary Planning Document for Walsall Waterfront Sustainability Appraisal Report

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Walsall Council has produced a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to expand on Policy WA12 for Walsall Waterfront, in the Walsall Unitary Development Plan (UDP). This Sustainability Appraisal has been produced to accompany the SPD, and has also been subjected to two consultation periods from the 19th September to the 24th October 2005 and from the 1st September to the 2nd October 2006.
- 1.2 The approach towards a sustainability appraisal in this report reflects the Government's sustainability agenda. The Government has set out four aims for sustainable development in its strategy: "A Better Quality of Life, a Strategy for Sustainable Development for the UK" (May 1999). These aims are reiterated in PPS 1: Delivering Sustainable Development and PPS 12: Local Development Frameworks. The four aims are:
- social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;
 - effective protection for the environment;
 - the prudent use of natural resources; and
 - maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.
- 1.3 This sustainability appraisal translates these broad aims into a range of factors against which to test the detailed guidance contained in the SPD for Walsall Waterfront. This will allow judgements to be made on the effects of the SPD in terms of the Government's basic aims for sustainable development and on a more practical level.

2. Supplementary Planning Document for Walsall Waterfront

- 2.1 The Council has published a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), in close consultation with Walsall Regeneration Company (WRC) and other partners, to provide detailed planning, urban design, land use and marketing guidance for the future development of the area known as “Walsall Waterfront”. This will ensure that development proposals best reflect the aspirations of both the Council and WRC to deliver high quality, best practice urban regeneration.
- 2.2 The development of the first draft SPD and Sustainability Appraisal involved the organisations represented by the Waterfront Committee, a sub-committee of the WRC Board. The Waterfront Committee is serviced by the Waterfront Steering Group, which includes officers of the Council, the WRC, Advantage West Midlands (AWM), British Waterways (BW), and Urban Splash.
- 2.3 The first draft SPD and Sustainability Appraisal were the subject of a formal five week consultation period from the 19th September 2006 to the 24th October 2005, which included a well attended public consultation event. Where applicable, comments received during the consultation process were incorporated into the revised draft SPD and this revised draft Sustainability Appraisal.
- 2.4 In response to the first consultation period, English Nature recommended that a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), concentrating on ecological and nature conservation issues, should be undertaken to assess the environmental impact of the SPD. This was recently completed, and the recommendations were taken into account in revising the SPD and this Sustainability Appraisal. In summary, the SEA concluded that (Christopher Betts Environmental Biology Limited, July 2006) “Except for insects found in the brownfield parts of the site, the impacts of the proposed development scheme were assessed and considered to be of negligible impact magnitude on a site of local Ecological and Nature Conservation Importance, thus the impacts were judged to be of no significance”. Though the development of the site will remove the transitory plant communities of the brownfield parts of the site which attract the current range of insects, similar sites will be created in the locality in the future and the construction of green/brown roofs and use of annual plants will mean that impact of the loss of such sites is considered to be only slightly adverse.
- 2.5 The SEA proposed that certain mitigation measures should be introduced to enhance the nature conservation significance of the site, details of which are available to perspective developers. However, in summary developers will be expected to take the following measures into consideration when developing proposals:
 - 2.5.1 The provision of green/brown roofs on some buildings and the development of areas of native tree species and annuals to provide foraging habitats for black redstart, other birds, bats and invertebrates. Early succession type vegetation could be introduced to maintain the attraction of invertebrates.
 - 2.5.2 The provision of sites suitable for roosting or hibernating bats and nesting redstarts will encourage their presence on the site. This should include the use of bird boxes,

bat roosting boxes or flat roosting boxes which can be attached to or incorporated into building structures

- 2.5.3 The provision of bays to increase the width of the canal to create boat free areas which can sustain aquatic and riparian vegetation should be considered. Coir fibre rolls, pre-planted with aquatic plants considered to be important to water voles, may also be considered.
- 2.6 Since a SEA was completed in accordance with the requirements of English Nature, the conclusions of which were that the environmental impact of the SPD will not be significant in terms of the SEA Directive, the Council did not review the SEA Screening Statement that accompanied the first draft of the SPD.
- 2.7 A revised draft SPD and Sustainability Appraisal were then the subject of a formal month long consultation period from the 1st September to the 2nd October 2006. Where applicable, comments received during the consultation process were incorporated into the final draft versions of the SPD and the Sustainability Appraisal. The SPD, the Statement on Consultation and this Sustainability Appraisal were adopted by the Council on the 8th November 2006.
- 2.8 The over-riding purpose of the SPD is to expand on Policy WA12 of the Walsall Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 2005. The guidance in the document is intended to shape the quality of developments that would come forward anyway, and is intended to give developers, local people and other interested parties an understanding of what is expected of development at Walsall Waterfront.

3. Purpose of this Sustainability Appraisal

- 3.1 PPS 12: Local Development Frameworks, recognises that “the main purpose of sustainability appraisal is to appraise the social, environmental and economic effects of plan strategies and policies, from the outset of the preparation process, so that decisions can be made that accord with the objectives of sustainable development”.
- 3.2 Sustainable development embraces economic, environmental and social concerns, and covers a range of issues from local to global. This appraisal considers the Walsall Waterfront SPD in terms of its sustainability, and following the recommendation from English Nature to undertake a Strategic Environmental Assessment, particular consideration has been given to issues of ecology and nature conservation. The appraisal tests two options against a set of sustainability objectives to see whether the SPD will contribute positively towards delivering sustainable development in Walsall:
- **Option 1:** An SPD is prepared and adopted to add value to the existing UDP Policy WA12, because it will enable the Council to negotiate a higher level of quality and design for developments at Waterfront.
 - **Option 2:** The existing UDP Policy WA12 is the main focus for making decisions on the future of developments at Waterfront.
- 3.3 In summary, this appraisal will study the difference to the sustainability agenda between continuing with Policy WA12 alone or by expanding on it through the use of Walsall Waterfront SPD alongside the Policy.

4. The Appraisal Framework

- 4.1 A commonly used and accessible method for sustainability appraisal is to use a matrix that cross-relates policies to specified sustainability objectives, and this method has been adopted here. The development of the matrix in this document has evolved from the Government's aims for sustainable development and been translated into the circumstances in Walsall.
- 4.2 The framework is used to compare the main UDP Policy WA12 with the SPD for Walsall Waterfront, which should achieve at least the same levels of sustainability as the main policy, and if possible should offer some improvement. Therefore, the matrix is used to compare the likely relative effects of the SPD, with what would be expected if the SPD was not available, and measures in terms of positive, neutral or negative contributions towards sustainable development.
- 4.3 From the Government's perspective, the "main purpose of sustainability appraisal is to appraise the social, environmental and economic effects of plan strategies and policies" (PPS 1: Delivering Sustainable Development). As referenced above, the Government has set out four aims for sustainable development in its "A Better Quality of Life, a Strategy for Sustainable Development for the UK" (May 1999). The four aims are:
- social progress which recognises the needs of everyone;
 - effective protection for the environment;
 - the prudent use of natural resources; and
 - maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.
- 4.4 The Council's response is encapsulated in the opening strategy policy statement of the UDP, which states that:
- "The mutually interdependent aims of sustainable development, urban regeneration, economic revitalisation, environmental improvement and social inclusion underlie all of the Plan's policies. Development proposals will be evaluated against these fundamental aims."*
- All policies and proposals of the UDP stem from these basic aims, and it is assumed in this appraisal that all new developments will be consistent with these basic aims and therefore also the Government's aims.
- 4.5 The key purpose of the Walsall Waterfront SPD is to ensure that the design of all developments at Waterfront is of the highest quality, and the key task of this Sustainability Appraisal is to assess if this is more likely to be achieved by implementing the SPD.
- 4.6 Building on the Government's four aims, a number of factors have been considered which contribute towards delivering sustainability, and these have been used to build the sustainability matrix. These factors relate to urban regeneration, including the promotion of a high quality and safe development, creating new opportunities for people, and promoting mixed use developments. More specifically they are:

- 4.6.1 Promoting communities which are inclusive, healthy, safe, and crime free.
- 4.6.2 Bringing forward sufficient land of a suitable quality in the right locations for housing, industrial, retail and commercial uses.
- 4.6.3 Giving high priority to ensuring access for all to jobs, health, education, shops, leisure and community facilities, ie access to jobs and services.
- 4.6.4 Focusing developments that attract a large number of visitors, especially retail developments, in existing centres to promote their vitality and viability, social inclusion and more sustainable patterns of development (ie supporting centres).
- 4.6.5 Recognising the need to enhance and protect biodiversity, especially protected species, and the need to address climate change, pollution and waste, and how resource management impacts upon biodiversity, protected species, pollution, water quality, waste, energy, and materials and techniques.
- 4.6.6 Promoting more efficient use of land through higher density and mixed use developments, using previously developed land, and reducing the need to travel by encouraging the provision of public transport.
- 4.7 These points comprise a broad range of sustainability indicators against which to test policies and proposals in local development documents, and have been applied to the Walsall Waterfront SPD in table 1 over the page.

Table 1: Net sustainability impacts of the Walsall Waterfront SPD – over and above UDP Policy WA12

Sustainability Indicators		Sustainability Impact
Social inequalities	Inclusive	✓
	Healthy	--
	Safe	--
	Crime Free	--
Land Allocations	Housing	--
	Industry	--
	Retail and Commercial	--
Accessibility	Jobs	✓
	Services	✓
Centres	Supporting Centres	✓
Environment	Biodiversity	✓✓
	Protected Species	✓✓
	Pollution	✓
	Water Quality	--
	Waste	--
	Energy	✓
	Materials and Techniques	✓
Efficient Land Use	Higher Density	✓
	Mixed Use	--
	Previously Developed Land	--
Need to Travel	Public Transport	✓
	Reducing Overall Need	✓

Key to impact on sustainability:

Major benefit	✓✓
Minor benefit	✓
Neutral	--
Minor detriment	✗
Major detriment	✗✗

5. Conclusion: Sustainability Appraisal of the Final Draft Walsall Waterfront SPD

- 5.1 The benefits of the Walsall Waterfront SPD will be spread across the social, economic and environmental spectrum (see table 1 above), adding overall minor benefits in terms of sustainability to UDP Policy WA12, though with some major benefits to two environmental indicators (biodiversity and protected species) which can be attributed to the completion of the Strategic Environmental Assessment. Overall, the SPD provides additional guidance which will ensure that Walsall Waterfront is a development of the highest quality which fully takes into consideration ecological and nature conservation needs.
- 5.2 Policy WA12 in the UDP promotes a mixed use development, so the SPD is likely to have only a negligible impact over and above the existing policy, in terms of the broader themes of social inequalities, land allocations and efficient land use. It will however have more of a positive impact than Policy WA12 in terms of density (due to references to massing and layout principles), and inclusiveness (due to references to planning obligations, particularly affordable housing provisions).
- 5.3 It is also considered that the SPD will have more of a positive impact than Policy WA12 in terms of the broader themes of accessibility, centres, environment and the need to travel. This can be justified due to there being specific reference in the SPD to accessibility and public transport, environmental issues (particular nature conservation and ecology issues) and the over-arching vision of creating a new and vibrant quarter in the town centre.