



Swindon Borough Local Plan 2011 Supplementary Planning Document

The Promenade Masterplan Sustainability Appraisal -Sustainability Matrices

**Prepared by Broadway Malyan
with The New Swindon Company, the South West Regional Development
Agency and Swindon Borough Council**

June 2006 - draft for consultation

Sustainability Appraisal - Sustainability Matrices The Promenade Masterplan

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1.0 Non-Technical Summary

- 1.1 This report outlines the results of an appraisal of The Promenade Masterplan being produced by The New Swindon Company, The South West of England Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) and Swindon Borough Council (SBC). The masterplan is intended to provide more detailed guidance for the regeneration of The Promenade area, adding to existing policies and strategies and encouraging investment, to encourage the creation of a high quality new cultural/civic quarter for Swindon.
- 1.2 The appraisal assesses the masterplan critically in terms of its contribution to sustainable development. Sustainable development is development which meets the needs of today's society without compromising the needs of future generations. It is broad concept but the intention is that in allowing development to meet current needs/demands, to ensure that it does so in a way that is not detrimental to future needs. Sustainability appraisal is now required by European and UK law for all land-use planning documents.
- 1.3 The masterplan sits beneath a number of existing planning policies/strategies, most notably the Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West Region, the Wiltshire and Swindon Structure Plan and the Swindon Borough Local Plan, all of which have been subject to sustainability appraisal in some form. The appraisal for The Promenade masterplan will therefore work at a local, not global, level assessing the impacts within the geographical area in which it is intended to operate.
- 1.4 The appraisal is issued for public consultation alongside the masterplan itself, and is intended to inform readers how the sustainability issues have been assessed and managed. As well as seeking comments on the masterplan, comments are sought on the sustainability appraisal.
- 1.5 The appraisal has concluded that the masterplan will be beneficial in sustainability terms, having positive benefits which include a reduction in road dominance, the provision of enhanced pedestrian/cycle links within The Promenade area and with the rest of Swindon town centre, and proposals for a more efficient use of sites. These benefits will assist the creation of a high quality cultural/civic quarter for Swindon.
- 1.6 As well as identifying the benefits of the masterplan when compared to existing plans/strategies, the appraisal has also identified some areas of concern, most notably the potential for traffic increases as a result of a greater number of people being attracted to the area. Whilst an increase in the number of people coming to the area, and the town centre

generally, is a key objective of policies and strategies for Swindon, the potential traffic implications need to be addressed appropriately.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The South West of England Regional Development Agency (SWRDA), with The New Swindon Company and Swindon Borough Council, has commenced work on a masterplan for The Promenade area in central Swindon. Swindon has been hugely successful at attracting inward investment and generating wealth but its town centre, and particularly the cultural and leisure facilities, have not kept pace with this growth. As such, the town centre is falling behind its competitors and therefore having a wider impact on Swindon's economy. These failings are due to a number of factors which include a lack of economic drivers for sustained success and the lack of a comprehensive vision for the regeneration of key locations within the Swindon central area. The Promenade is one such area.
- 2.2 In the light of the above, Swindon has embarked upon an ambitious and far-sighted programme of change and renewal. Local people will benefit from integrated transport services, diversified leisure and shopping facilities, a choice of high quality urban living accommodation, and distinctively designed urban quarters with safe, active street environments.
- 2.3 The Promenade is one of seven major projects being promoted by The New Swindon Company, to be brought about by a structured programme of sustained public and private sector investment and renewal. The Promenade is currently an under-used area west of Princes Street, which has scope to incorporate new uses, infrastructure and activities to create a high quality cultural/civic quarter for Swindon.
- 2.4 The masterplan will look at The Promenade and seek to maximise its strengths and overcome its weaknesses. The brief for the masterplan was drawn up by The New Swindon Company in consultation with SWRDA and the Borough Council.
- 2.5 As the masterplan is intended to guide development within The Promenade area and inform investment in that location, it is important that the document has weight in the statutory planning system. The intention is therefore to adopt it as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). If this is to occur, the masterplan needs a sustainability appraisal alongside it.

3.0 The Scoping Report

- 3.1 This appraisal document follows the production of a Scoping Report, which was issued for statutory consultation for a four-week period commencing on 27 February 2006. The regulations for preparing sustainability appraisals under the new planning system (defined by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) were set out in the Scoping Report, which also explained the relationship with the European Union Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment.
- 3.2 There is no requirement for the Scoping Report to be consulted upon widely. However, it does need to be sent to English Heritage, English Nature, the Countryside Agency and the Environment Agency, and to any other agency that is relevant in the view of the local authority. The agencies that were consulted in respect of the scoping report for The Promenade masterplan are listed at Appendix 1. These agencies were notified of the Scoping Report in a letter dated 27 February 2006, and their comments were sought by 4 April 2006. The comments received, and the responses, are set out at Appendix 2.

4.0 Consultation

- 4.1 This sustainability appraisal is published alongside the draft version of The Promenade Masterplan SPD. Both are subject to a formal period of consultation lasting 8 weeks. Consultation will be carried out in accordance with the provisions of the relevant Act and Swindon Borough Council's emerging Statement of Community Involvement.
- 4.2 Comments are now sought on this appraisal. The following questions are provided to guide potential comments:
- Do you feel that the 'business as usual' is the preferred option? Please explain your reasoning.
 - Do you feel that the implementation of The Promenade masterplan SPD is preferable? Please explain your reasoning.
 - Are there any changes to the masterplan that you consider would be beneficial?
 - Do you have any other comments?
- 4.3 Comments should be sent to Swindon Borough Council. The full address and contact details are set out on the response form and will be available within the published dates for formal consultation.

5.0 Appraisal Methodology and Limitations

- 5.1 The approach to this appraisal has been developed with reference to the ODPM guidance, '*Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Frameworks*' (November 2005).
- 5.2 The appraisal process has drawn on experience elsewhere, and that of The New Swindon Company, Swindon Borough Council, SWRDA and Broadway Malyan (the latter being the consultants preparing the Promenade masterplan). The Appraisal Framework, which is presented in matrix form at Appendix 3, contains 7 objectives and a range of questions covering social, economic and environmental issues within the Promenade area, to which the SPD will apply. Key baseline information for each objective has been included in the framework to assist the appraisal process.

Appraisal Limitations

- 5.3 The Promenade masterplan is being prepared in the context of national, regional and local planning policy. The emerging Local Plan (which is more up to date and relevant than the existing adopted plan) has been subject to a Public Inquiry and the Council has received the Inspector's Report and produced Proposed Modifications. The Local Plan has been subjected to two separate sustainability appraisals, the last being published in July 2003.
- 5.4 The appraisal of the Local Plan found that the policies were generally proactive in the progression of sustainable objectives established in the plan-making process. The appraisal process led to a further 37 changes to the plan to further the sustainability objectives. Particular strengths of the plan were highlighted, one of them being emerging Policy DS7 relevant to urban design, which has a close relationship to The Promenade Masterplan SPD.
- 5.5 It must be recognised, therefore, that the sustainability appraisal of The Promenade masterplan is rightly related in scale, function and scope to the masterplan itself. Given that the masterplan has a limited geographical coverage, and operates below the Local Plan, the appraisal assesses the sustainability impacts at this more local level.

Appraisal Options

- 5.6 The sustainability appraisal considers two options. The first is 'business as usual', which assumes that there is no masterplan for The Promenade. This assumes that the policies of the Local Plan, and other policies and strategies used more widely within the Borough, continue. This option has drawn upon the findings of the early interviews and research undertaken by Broadway Malyan with stakeholders and statutory providers.
- 5.7 The second option is that with the SPD in place. The SPD seeks to build on and add to existing policies/strategies and provides more detailed guidance on the regeneration of The Promenade area to deliver a cultural/civic quarter for the town that will support a thriving town centre.

Assessment Criteria

- 5.8 In assessing the options, criteria have been used to assist the process and ensure consistency. These are as follows:
- **Direction of Effect** - is the policy moving towards or away from sustainability?
 - **Severity of Effect** - will the effect be marginal or significant?
 - **Cumulative Effect** - does the effect exceed some threshold that results in some significant impact?
 - **Cross-boundary Effect** - does the effect impact on adjoining authorities or regions?
 - **Urban/Rural Impact** - will the policy have different impacts on the core settlements and the outlying urban fringe areas?
 - **Timing of Effect** - does the effect occur immediately or later, and does it last indefinitely or only temporarily?
- 5.9 The likely effect of the proposals has then been indicated for each of these criteria through the use of symbols, with additional points being recorded in a commentary column.
- 5.10 It should be recognised that assessing the performance of the masterplan against sustainability objectives and indicators is not an exact science, and by definition requires a degree of interpretation.

6.0 Outcomes

- 6.1 The detailed outcomes of the appraisal are set out in the matrices at Appendix 3. In summary, the appraisal indicates that the SPD would contribute further to the identified sustainability objectives than existing policies/strategies.
- 6.2. The 'business as usual' option includes a policy framework for the regeneration of The Promenade area to encourage, in principle, the creation of a new high quality cultural quarter for Swindon. However this framework is, by definition, general and does not provide detailed guidance for the regeneration of the area or for particular sites. As such, whilst it identifies the development potential in this area and a list of proposed uses, it does not provide guidance on the form of such development, or the scale or location of particular uses.
- 6.3 From the appraisal, however, it is clear that the proposed SPD would add value to existing policies and strategies. The primary way in which it would do so is through the provision of detail, building upon the existing policy framework and establishing a masterplan for the regeneration of the area. It additionally provides more detailed guidance on the redevelopment of key sites within the area. As a consequence, the SPD would enhance the existing policy framework and guide both planning decisions and, by providing additional detail and therefore certainty in relation to what is envisaged/will be permitted in this location, stimulate investment.
- 6.4 In providing this additional detail, the SPD would not only add to the framework/principles set out in existing strategies, but it would secure additional benefits by, for example, including proposals to reduce the dominance of road infrastructure in this area and proposals to increase employment diversity through the promotion of workspace for the creative arts. In this way, the SPD has the potential to secure even greater benefits for the area and Swindon town centre as a whole.

7.0 Mitigation

- 7.1 The sustainability appraisal has highlighted that there are some issues that may not improve as a result of The Promenade masterplan:
- a possible increase in car journeys to The Promenade area as it becomes a more attractive destination;
 - crime prevention/perception of crime

- 7.2 This suggests that there should be mitigation measures to respond to these potentially negative or neutral effects. These are considered below.

Increase in Car Journeys

- 7.3 The rationale for the regeneration of The Promenade area, and indeed Swindon town centre as a whole, is to enhance its offer and encourage more people to use it. With specific regard to The Promenade the desire, as already set out in the Local Plan and the Regeneration Framework for Swindon, is to develop a new cultural/civic quarter. The implication is that more people will be attracted to the area, with a consequent increase in potential car journeys. This increase is likely to come from both existing Swindon residents who travel to access the new higher quality facilities in this area, and also from people living outside the urban area/borough, who as a result of the enhanced cultural offer, now choose to travel to Swindon.
- 7.4 On the other hand, it is also likely that the proposals for The Promenade will have the potential to reduce traffic movements by, for example, providing a more diverse mix of uses. A mix of uses, which includes residential, would by definition have the potential to reduce car journeys, as a greater number of people would have the opportunity to live in the same location as the cultural/retail/leisure offer. The provision of a significantly enhanced pedestrian environment, including better quality, direct and appropriately located links, is also likely to persuade some people to walk/cycle rather than drive.
- 7.5 Against this background, it is evident that the proposals for The Promenade have the potential to both reduce traffic generation in some ways, but to increase it in others. A successful masterplan will lead to a greater number of people traveling to the area but the key is, therefore, to ensure that as many of these journeys as possible are made by non-car modes of transport. In this regard, the masterplan focuses upon the creation of a high quality public realm and enhanced and safe pedestrian/cycle routes to key locations within the area, and to other key locations in the town centre. In this way, it has the potential to mitigate the traffic impacts of additional visitors to the area.

Crime Prevention

- 7.6 The appraisal has indicated that the masterplan for The Promenade is likely to have a limited impact on levels of crime and the perception of

crime. This is due largely to the successes experienced by existing strategies in this regard.

- 7.7 However, the masterplan has taken the opportunity to remove the current series of dead-ends and alleyways in this area, and to replace them with a series of high quality public spaces and pedestrian/cycle routes, which would benefit from active frontages and natural surveillance. These elements of the masterplan are crucial in ensuring that it, insofar as is possible, the masterplan assists other strategies in reducing crime and the perception of crime.

8.0 Monitoring

- 8.1 The importance of monitoring is acknowledged within the appraisal. Appendix 3 not only sets out the appraisal outcomes, but also baseline information. The appraisal has drawn upon this existing data in order to assess the 'business as usual' and 'SPD' options. This baseline information will need to be maintained/updated in order to continue to assess performance.
- 8.2 Comments are sought on the means of monitoring and the datasets set out in Appendix 3.

**APPENDIX 1
ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED ON THE SCOPING DOCUMENT**

English Nature
English Heritage
Countryside Agency
Environment Agency

Government Office for the South West
South West Regional Assembly
Strategic Rail Authority
Highways Agency
Thames Water
Transco

This list was assembled with the assistance of Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire County Council.

APPENDIX 2

COMMENTS RECEIVED ON THE SCOPING DOCUMENT AND RESPONSES TO COMMENTS

Comments received within the period from 27th February and 4th April 006.

Comment

Response

Government Office for the South West

No formal comments to make on the document at this stage

No response required

South West Regional Assembly

Not in a position to examine the document in detail

No response required

Supports the development of the SPD

Sets out the RSS timetable & other documents the SPD should be in conformity with

The Countryside Agency

No formal comments in this instance

No response

The Highways Agency

Support identified sustainability objectives and masterplan objectives

Comments relevant to planning applications rather than sustainability appraisal

Support identified indicators subject to additional indication of an examination of the Trunk Road Network

Support identified scenarios

Request that paragraphs are added to require:

- Full consideration of sustainable transport
- Travel Plans

Thames Water

Amend sustainability objectives to make reference to the provision of water and sewerage utilities infrastructure

Add a sustainability objective relevant to water efficiency and flooding

The masterplan adds detail to existing Local Plan policies/allocations but does not propose additional development. Issues of water efficiency and flooding are of course important considerations and when development proposals within the area come forward, Thames Water will be consulted.

Environment Agency

The opportunities for environmentally sustainable practices are satisfactorily addressed in the scoping report as drafted

No response required

Transco (now Wales and West Utilities)

No formal comments

No response required

English Heritage

No specific comments to make at this stage

No response required

**APPENDIX 3
SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL MATRICES**

