

Select committee on the Environment – 30th March 2006

Report of the Director of the Urban Environment

Sustainable development in Decision Making

Purpose

1. To report back to the Committee on the initial evaluation of the draft Sustainability Appraisal Toolkit within the Directorate of the Urban Environment.

Background

2. In response to overseeing a programme of research into sustainability and Council decision making, the Committee agreed at its meeting on 31st October 2005 to consider the evaluation of the practical application of a sustainability appraisal tool.
3. The Sustainability appraisal toolkit was developed through the Dudley Community Partnership with input from the Council's Corporate Sustainability Group. The purpose of the toolkit is to enable the Council and its partners where appropriate to evaluate how projects and programmes etc meet the priorities of sustainable development and to make recommendations that will ultimately improve the outcomes of a project in term of sustainability.
4. Initial evaluation in order to assess the practicality of the toolkit has been carried out within the Directorate of the Urban Environment. So far, it has been piloted on a range of projects including a Town Centre Master plan, community environmental schemes and a 'Friends of the Park' Initiative.
5. Feedback from these initial pilots is that the toolkit is straightforward to use and has the potential to be used widely across the Directorate. It also helps to raise awareness of what sustainability means in practice including consideration of sustainability outcomes. Initial improvements to the toolkit have included simplifying some of the questions and adding a table which will help assessors of the toolkit to prioritise key sustainability improvements.
6. Whilst initial analysis of the Sustainability Appraisal Toolkit indicate that its use would add value to project and programme management It is felt that further analysis of the toolkit would be beneficial to consider in more detail the impacts of outcomes of projects in sustainability terms. This will also give a clearer idea of where the toolkit can add value in terms of the types of projects that would benefit from this process. Further analysis can also guide consideration of how the

toolkit can be mainstreamed into decision making rather than being seen as an 'add on' to project management.

7. Appendix A is a worked example of the Sustainability Appraisal Toolkit. The example that is taken from the piloted projects is one of the 'Friends of the Parks groups'. It is based on assessing the impact of any given proposal under the 3 pillars of sustainability – economic, social and environmental. It also includes suggested improvements to improve the overall project in sustainable development terms under these headings.

Finance

8. There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of the report.

Law

9. Under section 2 of the Local Government Act, the Council has the power to do anything which they consider is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of their area. The principles of sustainability would help to achieve these objectives.

Equality Impact

10. One of the principles of sustainable development is about achieving equality and a better quality of life for all; therefore by integrating sustainability objectives into decision making should make a positive contribution to delivering equal opportunities within the Borough of Dudley.
11. The toolkit aims to give consideration to children and young people in decision making by asking the following questions under the 'Social Impact section':

Does the proposal :

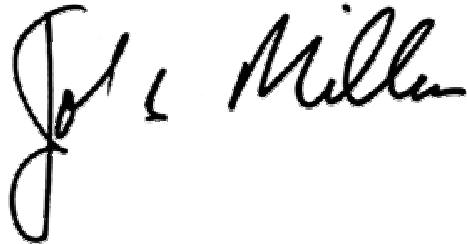
- 'Improve the facilities, access and opportunities for children and young people?'
- 'Involve all stakeholders in decision making'
- 'Improve access to education and training opportunities for all'.

12. The toolkit has not specifically been consulted with children and young people and they have not been involved in developing the toolkit. However, key officers who work in delivering children and young persons services have been involved in the process.

Recommendation

13. That further testing of the sustainability appraisal toolkit is undertaken across projects/initiatives within the Directorate of the Urban environment and that a further report is presented at a future committee meeting that will:

- Give consideration to how the toolkit impacts on outcomes of projects/initiatives in sustainability terms
- Give consideration to the level of projects/initiatives that should be subject to a sustainability appraisal
- Give consideration to awareness raising/training requirements including links into the project management training module.



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List of Background Papers

None.

The sustainability appraisal toolkit as a worked example: One of the 'Friends of the Parks' groups

ACTION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

A SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL TOOLKIT FOR DUDLEY BOROUGH

Developed by **Strategic Housing and Environment Partnership**
(Dudley Community Partnership)



January 2006

Action for Sustainable Development

Contents

	Page
1.0 Introduction.....	1
• Purpose of Toolkit.....	1
• When to Use It.....	2
• How to Use the Toolkit.....	2
2.0 Scoring	3
3.0 Potential Social Impacts..... (Questions and Additional Guidance)	4 - 6
4.0 Potential Environmental Impacts (Questions and Additional Guidance)	7 - 9
5.0 Potential economic impacts (Questions and Additional Guidance)	10 - 12
6.0 Priority Improvements.....	13

ACTION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT A SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL TOOLKIT

1.0 Introduction

Sustainability is a goal which is often talked about and commitments are made to pursue sustainable policies and projects. However, it is hard to appraise what that means in practice and whether it is being achieved.

Sustainable development is about improving people's quality of life both now and in the future without having a detrimental affect on the earth's resources. It requires both individual and joint action

The focus for sustainability is on encouraging joined up activities that can meet local, regional and national environmental, economic and social goals at the same time. It is about achieving benefits for society, the economy and the environment in harmony, rather than one being achieved at the expense of the others.

The aim of the sustainability appraisal is to provide a pragmatic way of testing the sustainability of new projects and proposals.

It is based on assessing the impact of any given proposal against a series of criteria covering the 3 pillars of sustainability – **economic, social** and **environmental**. The idea is that projects should seek to score positively in as many areas as possible. Under each main topic, a series of questions probe whether a proposal will have a positive, negative or neutral impact. The appraisal can be used flexibly – either as a self evaluation tool by project developers or on a more official basis by an appointed group.

The toolkit adds value to decision making in the following ways;

- Assists decision makers to make better informed decisions by integrating social, economic and environmental factors. It is the projects that have multiple benefits on all these fronts that will score best.
- Allows the likely impact of projects to be identified and potentially improved.
- Raises awareness about what sustainable development means in practice and what sort of proposals officers (and others) should be submitting to deliver it locally.
- Involves stakeholders and partners in the decision making process and stimulates dialogue.

The appraisal is based on the principles of sustainable development within the Council's Sustainability Statement (appendix 1). This reflects the key priorities of the council Plan, and also the Community Strategy.

When to use it?

The toolkit can be used at any stage of your initiative’s development and review. In most cases, it is recommended that the toolkit is used at the development stage of a policy/project and then again at the implementation stage. It could also be used to support grant applications.

<p>Who should carry out the Assessment?</p> <p>The toolkit can be used in a number of different ways;</p>		
<p>Informal Assessment by Project development team</p>	<p>Informal Assessment by proposer organisation, peer group or partners</p>	<p>Formal Assessment by appointed group</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May or may not include scoring (may help team to arrive at suggested improvements) • Suggested improvements taken into consideration as part of project development process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely to include scoring • Suggested improvements reported back to project development team for consideration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoring is part of formal assessment • Findings reported back to relevant decision making body, e.g. when the relative merits of different projects are being judged against each other
<p><u>How to use the Toolkit?</u></p>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Answer the questions with both positive and negative impacts being identified and identify ‘suggested improvements’ in relation to negative impacts. 2. Judge a proposal over its whole lifespan and remember that some impacts (e.g. pollution) can be global as well as local. 3. Make relative not absolute judgements – so an energy efficient new building would score positively even if it consumes more energy than if no building had been built. 4. Complete the ‘priority improvements’ section at the end of the appraisal. 		

2. Scoring

The scoring system should work as follows;

• A positive score of 2	→	The proposal is entirely positive on sustainability
• A positive score of 1	→	The proposal is fairly positive but there could still be some improvements on sustainability.
• A nil score	→	The proposal has no impact on sustainability
• A negative score of -1	→	The proposal has a negative impact that can be counterbalanced by positives, e.g. a proposal where some recycled materials can be used but there are opportunities to use other recycled materials also.
• A negative score of -2	→	The proposal has a significant negative impact on sustainability or misses an opportunity, e.g. no attempt has been made to consider the use of recycled materials in a proposal, i.e. missed opportunities.

Further Advice and Feedback

If you have any queries about using this toolkit, or wish to offer any feedback about its use, please contact Clare Palmer (Principal Policy Officer) on (01384) 814403 or clare.palmer@dudley.gov.uk or Alex Webb (Sustainable Development Officer) on (01384) 814403 or alexandra.webb@dudley.gov.uk

3.0 What is the potential social impact of this proposal?

Questions How does the Proposal.....	Impacts (negative)	Impacts (positive)	Evaluation					Suggested Improvements
			-2	-1	0	1	2	
Encourage healthier lifestyles and reduce health inequalities?		Increased activities with health benefits, e.g. health walks and greater range of sports activities					2	
Maintain and improve the range of facilities locally?		Whole ethos of liveability project is to improve facilities of parks in conjunction with local community					2	
Reduce both crime and fear of crime?		Increased usage has encouraged people to police park themselves Park watch Secure by design					2	
Promote the independence of vulnerable adults?		As usage and facilities increase, vulnerable adults feel more secure and enjoy park more. DDA access audits being undertaken with AID (access in Dudley)					2	
Improve facilities, access and opportunities for children and young people?		Play areas for under and over 10’s Youth group meets once a week Multi-use games area (muga) lit until 10 p.m. Different sports activities					2	
Develop strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds and communities?	Membership of ‘Friends of Group’ largely white over 50’s	There is a youth group and work with college to encourage more positive youth participation. Consultation has reached some hard to reach groups				1		Progress is being made but acknowledgement that there needs to be further engagement between different groups and make ‘Friends Group’ more representative

Sustainability appraisal – Example A - ‘Friends of the Park’ Group

Questions How does the Proposal.....	Impacts (negative)	Impacts (positive)	Evaluation					Suggested Improvements
			-2	-1	0	1	2	
Involve all stakeholders in decision making?		Main aim of the liveability project6. ODPM is looking for service reform of council					2	
Improve access to education and training opportunities for all?	Opportunity to raise awareness of people who live in vicinity of park to utilise the park and benefits of the park	Developing a training programme for members of the Friends of Parks Groups to address the skills gaps of these groups, e.g. organising events, web site design, working with young people and BME groups				1		Organise specific activities with educational spin offs
Contribute to improving the standard of housing for local people?					0			

Additional Guidance

Encourage healthier lifestyles and reduce health inequalities.

Many factors contribute to health – good housing, reducing poverty and pollution, reducing stress, smoking and the misuse of drugs, alcohol and solvents, diet and exercise. Tackling health inequalities means reducing the gap in health status between the most deprived communities and the general population. This requires; tackling the underlying determinants of health, preventing ill-health and promoting health and healthier lifestyles, strengthening communities so they can contribute to improving their own health and developing services being responsive to the distinctive needs of deprived communities, vulnerable groups and individuals.

Maintain and improve the range of facilities locally

Consider: the provision of physical access for people with disabilities, access to local health and social care services, local childcare opportunities, access to public open space and local food shops and information and advice to the community on the services and amenities available.

Reduce both crime and fear of crime

Will the proposal affect the safety and security of communities, individuals and property, improve surveillance, promote design that discourages crime, addresses anti-social behaviour?

Promote the independence and facilities for of vulnerable adults

Will the proposal support vulnerable adults living in their own homes and the welfare to work agenda (bridge to work) which is to improve vulnerable adults' quality of life by giving them the necessary training and assistance to find and retain jobs?

To improve facilities access and opportunities for children and young people

Consider: educational attainment and stability of placements (foster care, homes) etc., programmes targeted specifically at children and young people and engagement of children and young people in activities/decision making processes.

Develop strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds and communities

Will the proposal create a sense of belonging and wellbeing for all members of the community, support local community and voluntary action and volunteering, support community cohesion and leadership within communities and promote citizenship and pride within local areas

Involve all stakeholders in decision making

Will the proposal involve stakeholders, including the community during development, implementation and monitoring, identify and engage with hard to reach stakeholders, enable stakeholders to influence the outcome, ensure openness, transparency and accountability in the decision making process?

Improve access to education and training opportunities for all

Will the proposal improve educational standards and help disadvantaged people gain access to training and work?

Contribute to improving the standard of housing for local people

Will the proposal help to tackle homelessness and/or respond to other priority housing needs and improve the quality and/or upkeep of the current housing stock?

4.0 What is the potential environmental impact of this proposal?

Questions How does the Proposal	Impacts (negative)	Impacts (positive)	Evaluation					Suggested Improvements
			-2	-1	0	1	2	
Enhance the quality of landscapes and townscape?		Working with Borough archaeologist to ensure that any works do not infringe Priory ruins Park improvements add to character/distinctiveness of local area				1		
Protect or enhance biodiversity?	No specific initiatives to enhance biodiversity. Initiative focuses on social aspects as this is a town park				0			Consideration of planting to encourage biodiversity. Focus will be to concentrate on biodiversity in other parks, e.g. wildflower meadow in Wollescote Park
Protect and improve local environmental quality, e.g. litter and graffiti, noise, odours, dog fouling?	Some contradictions, e.g. play areas in operation until 10.00 pm can create noise and light pollution leading to complaints	Provision of more waste bins Greater park keeper coverage Work with enforcement officers				1		Acknowledgement that environmental quality is improving but further improvements are needed. Therefore area of focus
Prevent and reduce air, land and water pollution (cleanliness)?	Improved facilities and increased usage will result in more car journeys, therefore more pollution including carbon dioxide	Frequent bus service and many people walk to park. May increase with emphasis on walking as part of healthy lifestyle			0			Look at opportunities for tree planting (trees in park act as carbon sink)
Reduce, reuse and recycle resources wherever possible?	Most materials are new rather than reused or recycled. There are opportunities, e.g. enviromulch made locally from pallets	Rubberised floor of play areas made from recycled products		-1				Moves to purchase 'enviromulch' and raise awareness to 'Friends of Group' of benefits of recycled materials

Questions How does the Proposal	Impacts (negative)	Impacts (positive)	Evaluation					Suggested Improvements
			-2	-1	0	1	2	
Minimise requirement for fuel use, promote efficient energy use and increase use of energy from renewable sources?	Have explored the possibility of using neon solar panel cats eyes. Initial outlay is more expensive but running costs are negligible			-1				There is a recognition about what can be achieved, but this is hampered by traditional purchasing methods which rarely take life cycle costs into account.
Enhance previously developed or contaminated land?		Park is on old landfill site					2	

Additional Guidance

Enhance the quality of landscapes and townscape

Consider: the quality of the landscape (historic/cultural value), access to open spaces (such as parks and nature reserves), historic buildings, conservation areas, places of geological and archaeological value, character of local areas.

Protect and Enhance Biodiversity

Consider: existing wildlife, endangered species, habitats, opportunities for new habitat creation, managing existing woodlands, enhancing existing wildlife/landscape designations.

Protect and Improve Local Environmental Quality

Consider: fly tipping, graffiti, vandalism, sense of safety, traffic congestion, litter, dog fouling, noise, abandoned vehicles and possible light pollution.

Prevent and Reduce Air, Land and Water Pollution

Consider: industrial and traffic related emissions, conformity to relevant waste water regulations, drainage issues.

Reduce, Re-use and Recycle Waste wherever possible

Consider: re-using secondary materials, supporting research and development of products, employing waste reduction methods to minimise waste, utilise waste as a resource, reducing the amount of residual waste to landfill, and buying materials that use recycled products.

Minimise Requirement for Energy Use, Promote Efficient Energy Use and Increase Use of Energy from Renewable Sources

Consider: renewable energy, e.g. wind, solar, combined heat and power, anaerobic digestion etc for minimising greenhouse gas emissions and for avoiding unrecoverable resource depletion. Consider also energy efficiency measures, e.g., heating and lighting and appliances such as computers.

Enhance Previously Developed or Contaminated Land

Consider the brown field/green field hierarchy of land use (brown field Land is land that was previously developed).

5.0 What is the potential economic impact of this proposal?

Questions How does the Proposal...	Impacts (negative)	Impacts (positive)	Evaluation					Suggested Improvements
			-2	-1	0	1	2	
Impact on existing businesses?	No local procurement			-1				Consider opportunities and benefits of local purchasing decisions. 'Enviromulch' is produced locally
Encourage inward/indigenous investment? e.g. promote business start-ups		New café – encourages more use of park. Run by 'Friends of Group'					2	
Seek to employ people from disadvantaged communities and groups through positive action programmes?		Future skills project – positive action programme to carry out work					2	
Improve physical accessibility of jobs through the location of sites and transport links close to areas of high unemployment?	Looked at relocating some park keepers near their homes but this has encountered some problems				0			
Address the skills gap and enable skills progression?		Future skills has enabled some skills progression Also programme in place to build up skills of park keepers					2	

Questions How does the Proposal...	Impacts (negative)	Impacts (positive)	Evaluation					Suggested Improvements
			-2	-1	0	1	2	
Improve competitiveness?					0			
Affect the economy in the long-term?		<p>Improving skills through initiatives such as future skills</p> <p>Research indicates that park improvements increases property prices</p>				1		

Additional Guidance

Impact on existing businesses

Consider: local procurement, development of local supply chains, business diversity

Encourage inward/indigenous Investment

Consider: business start-ups, local employment opportunities

Seek to employ people from disadvantaged communities and groups through positive action programmes

Examples include setting up social businesses, workforce development plans and child-care provision. Programmes such as Future Skills Dudley seek to place local people into local jobs through direct training via in-house accredited centres, brokered training through partners and client support such as key basic skills together with advice and guidance services.

Improve the physical accessibility of jobs

Consider where the site is located in relation to potential employees, transport links especially in relation to areas of high unemployment

Address the skills gap and enable skills progression

Consider: contribution to narrowing the skills gap and providing opportunities for progression within the local economy including training opportunities.

Impact on the economy in the long-term

Consider: move in local economy from a low value added to a high value added base, provision of suitable employment sites.

PRIORITY IMPROVEMENTS

This final section aims to help you focus on the key priorities for suggested improvements. For each section of the appraisal (social, economic and environmental) look at the 'suggested improvements' column and decide which are the priority improvements that need addressing. It is suggested that you prioritise no more than 3 improvements for each section, and note them in the table below. If no suggested improvements have been identified in the appraisal leave the relevant sections on this form blank.

Sustainability Pillar	Key Priorities for Suggested Improvements
Social	1 Further engagement required of 'hard to reach groups' to make 'Friends Group' more representative
	2 Organise specific activities within the park with educational spin offs, e.g. greater links with school curriculum, specific groups
	3
Environmental	1 Consideration of planting, including trees to encourage biodiversity and for trees to act as a carbon sink
	2 Purchasing decisions to take more account of environmental considerations, e.g. recycled products and low energy products. Life cycle costs to be taken into account
	3
Economic	1 Consider opportunities for local purchasing decisions.
	2
	3