



'DIY SA': SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

(including strategic environmental assessment)

OF NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS



August 2011

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This is one of a range of guides listed in CABE's very useful 'Neighbourhood planning toolkits and guidance'. The other guides and toolkits can be found at www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-work/CABE/Localism-and-planning/Neighbourhood-planning-toolkits-and-guidance/. We are very grateful to the many people who commented on the draft version of this guidance, and whose ideas have helped to shape this guidance.

This guidance is primarily aimed at neighbourhood forums and parish councils.

This guidance is correct to the best of our knowledge on 25 August 2011. Levett-Therivel and URS Scott Wilson will not accept liability for any legal or other action arising from use of this guidance.

WELCOME TO DIY SA

Neighbourhood plans are still being debated in Parliament. However when they officially become part of the town planning process they are likely to need an assessment of their environmental, social and economic impacts. Required by European legislation¹ and UK guidance², this joint assessment is called 'sustainability appraisal' (SA). The steps of SA are basically the same as good plan-making³, namely:

1. Identify what the neighbourhood plan must do, cannot do and should do ('scope the plan')
2. Identify the characteristics of the neighbourhood, including existing issues/problems
3. Identify possible things to include in the plan (options/alternatives)
4. Prepare a draft SA report and check with expert bodies to make sure that the SA process so far is OK
5. Assess the environmental, social and economic impacts of the alternatives, choose a set of preferred alternatives (the draft neighbourhood plan), and explain the reason for the choice
6. If the draft neighbourhood plan would have any major impacts, try to minimise these by fine-tuning the draft plan
7. Prepare a final SA report and make it available alongside the draft neighbourhood plan for comment by the public and expert bodies

The government estimates⁴, based on the cost of consultants' or local authority planners' time, that a typical SA⁵ will cost between £10,000 and £30,000. We think that it can be done for much less than this, maybe for free, if local residents are willing to do the work themselves: so you can **save money** by doing much of the SA yourself. Some funding has also been provided to the RTPI and others to support the process, and your local planning authority is available to support you. Carrying out a 'DIY SA' also has the advantage of making sure that local residents **develop an interest and understanding of the local area**, and can make sure that the **plan is effectively put into action**.

This guide explains which neighbourhood plans require SA, some principles of SA, and then how to 'DIY your SA' by carrying out each of the steps above.

Things you will need:

- Other people
- Access to a computer and the Internet
- A place to hold some community events
- Some large-scale maps of your neighbourhood
- Time and energy

¹ [Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment](#), also known as the 'strategic environmental assessment Directive' or 'SEA Directive'

² Planning Advisory Service, 'Sustainability appraisal support', <http://www.pas.gov.uk/pas/core/page.do?pageId=225072>

³ We have included a lot of examples of parish plans in this guidance, to show how close these links are.

⁴ Communities and Local Government (2011) [Localism Bill: neighbourhood plans and community right to build: Impact Assessment](#).

⁵ The estimates refer to SEA, the narrower form of SA which focuses on environmental concerns.

DOES YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REQUIRE SA?

Whether your plan requires SA depends on factors such as

- how much it might affect the environment, society or the economy
- whether it will lead to major projects in the future
- whether it will affect special nature conservation sites.

We suggest that you discuss this with your local authority planner, who will be able to steer you through the legislation. There is no harm in carrying out an SA where it is not legally required, but **you can be legally challenged for *not* carrying out an SA where one *is* required.** So **in case of doubt, carry out the SA.** You may want to do this anyway, simply because SA helps to make sure that your neighbourhood plan is as well thought-out and as sustainable as possible.

PRINCIPLES OF ASSESSMENT

Legal compliance: Although SA is a logical set of steps, it is also a legal requirement. In the past, SA has been used as the 'soft underbelly' of plans - as a way of legally challenging them – so it is important to make sure that your SA is legally adequate. [Appendix A](#) summarises the full legal requirements and provides a web-link to the legislation. We cannot guarantee that following this guidance will definitely lead to a legally compliant SA. However each of the SA steps that we discuss here has a corresponding legal requirement, and *not* fulfilling that requirement will *definitely* mean that your SA is *not* legally compliant. In other words:

- **Carry out *all* of the steps in this guidance** – at the beginning of each step we explain the corresponding legal requirement.
- **Get someone with SA experience to check a draft of your SA report** for legal compliance.

Involve the community: Both writing a neighbourhood plan and assessing it should involve as many members of your community as possible. Local people can provide information about what is important to them, ideas for how change can be managed in a sustainable manner, and suggestions for improvements that they would like made to the neighbourhood. Neighbourhood plans must be adopted by a referendum of local people⁶, so the more people are involved, the more likely the referendum is to pass. CABE's guides and toolkits give useful ideas on how to involve the community. Make a particular effort to involve people who have traditionally been marginalised and vulnerable, such as young people and people from ethnic minorities, so that the neighbourhood plan can help to meet their needs.



Compton & Shawford Parish Plan

⁶ We understand that this may still change

Start the SA when you start working on your plan: The biggest mistake that people make in SA is to think of it as a 'snapshot' that happens late in plan-making. At that stage, it is too late for the SA to properly influence the plan; that becomes obvious from the SA report; and in turn that makes a legal challenge much more likely. Starting the SA too late means that you incur all of the costs of SA but get only few of its benefits. Table 1 shows how the SA stages should match up to your plan-making stages, and also roughly how long each SA stage will take. **Do not start thinking about what should be in your plan until you have completed Steps 1 and 2 of the SA.**

Table 1. Links between plan-making and SA stages

Stage in developing the plan*	SA step	SA outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Getting started and organised 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing plans and strategies for the area 	1. Identify what the neighbourhood need and need not do	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a profile of your community Audit existing infrastructure and designations Carry out surveys and needs assessments Summarise findings and consider how to tackle the issues 	2. Identify the characteristics of the neighbourhood, including existing issues/problems	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft a vision and objectives for the area Feedback and further community involvement 	3. Identify possible things to include in the plan (options/alternatives)	
	4. Prepare an SA 'scoping report' and check with expert bodies to make sure that the SA process so far is OK	Formal SA 'scoping report'
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess impact of alternatives Choose preferred alternatives and draw up proposals Check for conformity with strategic policies in the development plan Consult on proposals 	5. Assess the environmental, social and economic impacts of the alternatives, choose a set of preferred alternatives (the draft neighbourhood plan), and explain the reason for the choice	Ongoing documentation of the assessment findings to inform the development of the neighbourhood plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fine tune your plan to minimise overall impacts Agree monitoring, evaluation and review 	6. If the draft neighbourhood plan would have any major impacts, try to minimise these by fine-tuning the draft plan	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare final neighbourhood plan document Consultation 	7. Prepare a final SA report and make it available alongside the draft neighbourhood plan for comment by the public and expert bodies	Formal final SA report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent examination Recommended alterations Referendum and adoption 	Where appropriate, additional cycles of steps 3, 5, 6 and 7 to deal with changes to the plan	Possibly other SA report(s)

* Based on Rural Community Council of Essex / Essex Planning Officers' *Neighbourhood Planning Guide*; to the best of our knowledge in August 2011; details may well still change although the broad steps are likely to remain

Make friends with your local authority planners: The Localism Bill includes a local planning authority 'duty to support' where neighbourhood plans have adequate local support. This includes advice and practical support, although not necessarily financial help. Your district or borough council planners will know where to find information, will know experts whom you could contact, and can provide you with useful maps. Importantly, they will know the local plan, and so what your neighbourhood plan must be 'in conformity with'. They can also comment on draft versions of the neighbourhood plan and SA report.

Consider involving independent 'outsiders'. The SA process should act as a check to ensure that the neighbourhood plan is as sustainable as possible. Both the neighbourhood plan and the SA report will be scrutinised by an independent examiner. It may be worthwhile involving someone independent – a local authority planner, members of other neighbourhood forums, or a consultant – in the assessment process, to act as a 'critical friend' and check the robustness of your emerging SA.

Write things down: The SA report should present the 'story' of how you wrote your neighbourhood plan. This will allow people who have not been involved in the plan-making process to understand what information was considered, why certain decisions were made, and who was involved in plan-making. Keep track of decisions as they get made, so that things don't get forgotten.

Focus on alternatives: You may have very clear views about how your neighbourhood should develop, and may have volunteered to work on the plan to help put your vision into practice. However you need to be open to other options: those that other people suggest, and those that might be better environmentally, socially or economically. SA involves putting different options side by side, assessing their impacts, and helping to choose the best course forward.

Brace yourself: There is a reason why an SA costs so much if someone else does it. You need to have enough time and energy, and be methodical and professional about this... But, that said,

Enjoy it! All of the authors of this guide are consultants who have been carrying out SAs for a long time, but we still enjoy the process (enough to want to share our ideas through this guidance), and we think that you will too.



Current situation and three design options for Newtown, Birmingham (Newtown Masterplan)

STEP 1. IDENTIFYING WHAT YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN MUST DO AND CANNOT DO

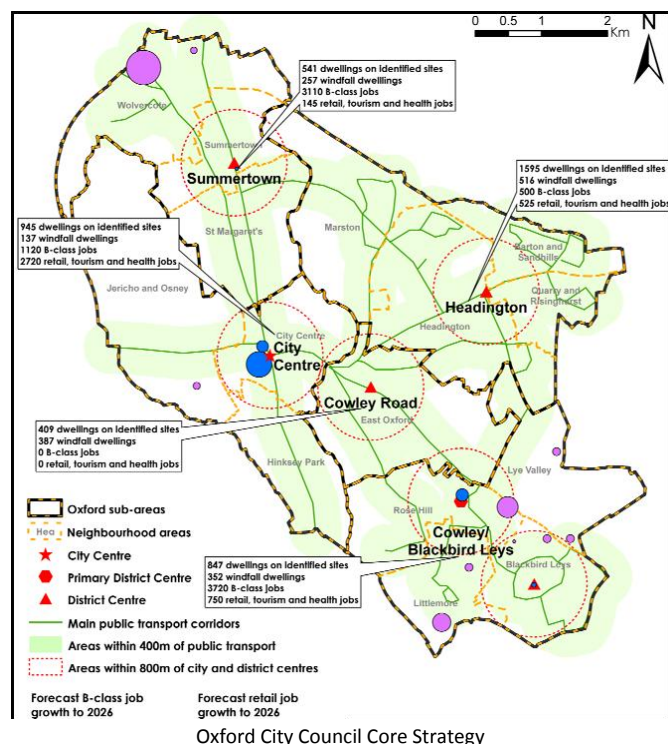
What materials are needed? Computer and internet access, local planning officer

Why is this needed? Schedule 2 a) and e) of the [Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004](#)

Start this step by listing the kinds of issues that you plan need and need not cover. Your local authority will be able to advise on the types of issue that should be off, or might usefully be on, the agenda, from housing and the provision of services (e.g. public transport) and facilities (e.g. youth centres) to the control of dogs.

Neighbourhood plans must be consistent with national planning policy and must conform to the strategic elements of the local authority's Core Strategy and other development plan documents (DPDs). So if **your local authority has a Core Strategy/DPDs** as opposed to an out of date Local Plan, then **read them** (we didn't say that DIY SA would be *all fun*). If your neighbourhood straddles more than one local authority, look at all of the relevant authorities' plans. Look for three types of plan policies (these are typically shown in bold or in boxes):

1. General statements about how development should take place in the local authority. For instance, development plans often include statements about reducing the need to travel, providing enough affordable homes, protecting the environment, and providing a good range of job opportunities. Make sure to include all relevant environmental policies.
2. A statement about how much housing (and employment/jobs if the plan includes this) will be provided. This is often broken down by parish/ neighbourhood or by planning period (for instance x homes in the first five years, then y homes in the next five years). Neighbourhood plans can propose more housing than Core Strategies/DPDs but not less.
3. Detailed statements and maps that relate to your neighbourhood, for instance about improvements planned to your local shopping facilities



Also read your local authority's most recent Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), which identifies possible locations for new development.

Summarise these in a few pages. You may want to use a table like Table 2:

Table 2. Template for policy analysis

Core Strategy policy	What the policy says	How it affects our neighbourhood plan
CS7 Energy and natural resources	Developments of over 10 homes will only be permitted if they demonstrate that they will deliver 10% or more of their energy through on-site renewables	We should consider whether the neighbourhood plan should promote a particular type of renewable
CS8 Land at Lime Road	170 new homes and a primary school are planned for Lime Road	We may want to think about how the houses are designed, public transport access etc.
...		

You also need to be aware of national government guidance on sustainability and planning⁷. Main messages from this guidance, which you may want to include in this section of your SA, are that plans should:

- reduce the need to travel, and improve access by walking, cycling and public transport
- help to provide an adequate number of affordable homes
- help to regenerate areas that are deprived
- support employment, particularly local and small-scale employment
- protect areas designated for their nature conservation, heritage or landscape value; and generally protect and improve biodiversity and the cultural heritage
- promote good design, including [Building for Life](#)
- reduce the risk of flooding by not building in the floodplain and incorporating good drainage in new developments
- minimise waste generation, and promote reuse, recycling and composting
- minimise energy use, promote renewable energy, and design for climate change
- minimise air, water, soil, noise and light pollution
- help to protect and provide publicly accessible open space, which in turn has health benefits

Your local planning officer may highlight other national policy that is particularly relevant to your neighbourhood.

⁷ Communities and Local Government, Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) and Planning Policy Statements (PPS), <http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningsystem/planningpolicy/planningpolicystatements/>

STEP 2. IDENTIFYING THE CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

What materials are needed? Computer and internet access, local planning officer, large scale maps, digital camera, meeting room for public meeting and/or materials for a survey of local residents

Why is this needed? Schedule 2 b) - d) of the [Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004](#)

An important part of SA is identifying what is in your neighbourhood (and any wider area that your plan might affect), what is important for local residents, and how these things might change in the future without your plan. The [legislation](#) suggests that the SA should describe the 'baseline environment' in your neighbourhood in terms of:

- nature conservation
- landscape
- heritage
- air and climate
- water
- soil
- human population
- human health
- 'material assets', which include transport, waste and infrastructure

Not all of these will be relevant for all neighbourhood plans, but if you decide to not cover one of these topics you should explain why not.

For SA, you will want to widen this to also include issues such as:

- employment and jobs
- education and skills
- different groups of people in the neighbourhood, for instance young and old people, people without access to cars, Gypsies and Travellers

Essentially you need to write a chapter for your SA report using the bullet points above as headings. As part of their 'duty to support', local authority planners may provide much of this information⁸. If you need to collect the information yourself, unfortunately no one data source provides all of this information, nor is there one perfect way of doing this. Here are our suggestions.

Start with a map of designations

Nature conservation, landscape, heritage and some social issues are often best presented on a map, with accompanying explanation, photos etc. Table 3 shows the kinds of things that could be

⁸ For instance, Aylesbury Vale District Council is preparing 'fact packs' of information for their neighbourhood forums: see <http://www.aylesburyvaldc.gov.uk/planning-building/planning-policy/what-is-the-vale-of-aylesbury-plan-/fact-packs/>

mapped, if they exist in your neighbourhood. So start by getting a large-scale black and white map of the neighbourhood (several if you can, to allow for mistakes), and colouring it in.

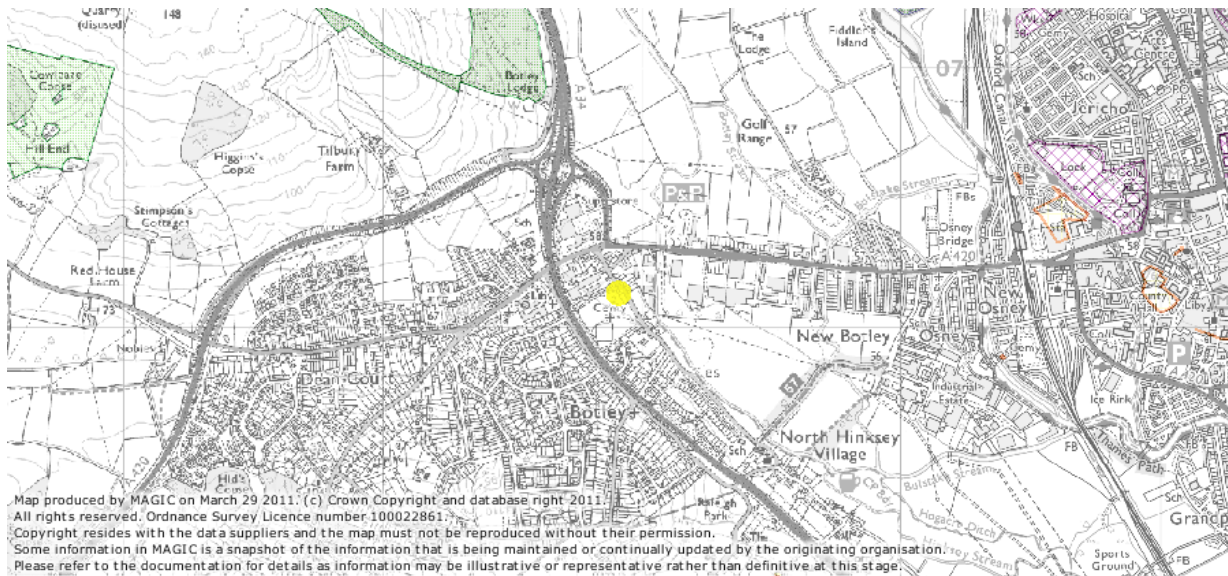
Table 3. National and local level designations

	nature conservation	landscape	heritage	social and other
national level	Special Protection Area for birds Special Area of Conservation for habitats and species Ramsar wetland sites Site of Special Scientific Interest	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty National Park Heritage coast	World Heritage Site Scheduled Monument and its settings	Right of way
local level (examples)	Site of Nature Conservation Interest (or similar designation)	Green Belt Strategic gap	Listed building and its setting Conservation Area	Allotment Village green

There are two ways of finding out about *national level designations*:

Method 1: The MAGIC map method	Method 2: The proposals map method
<p>Go to http://magic.defra.gov.uk/website/magic/</p> <p>Under 'Step 1', select topic 'Design my own topic'</p> <p>Tick the following (eliminating those that are clearly not applicable): Heritage Coasts, National Parks, Protected Wreck Sites, Ramsar Sites, Registered Battlefields, Registered Parks and Gardens, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Protection Areas, World Heritage Sites, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Green Belt, National Nature Reserves, Scheduled Monuments, Special Areas of Conservation</p> <p>Go back to the top of the page and click 'done'</p> <p>Under 'Step 2', provide a postcode or a place in your neighbourhood (you can subsequently still move around the map). Agree to the terms of use and open map (this will take a few seconds)</p> <p>You can move around the map by using the symbols in the lower left corner to zoom in and out, and the little map in the top right corner to move to different locations</p>	<p>Go to your local authority's proposals map. This will be either part of the new Core Strategy or of the 'old style' Local Plan. Your planning officer will help you to find it if you can't.</p> <p>In the key for the map, find the designations that are bullet-pointed in the left column.</p>
<p>Add information about listed buildings by using http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk which is self-explanatory.</p>	

This is what an output from the MAGIC map method looks like:



Transfer the national level information from the maps onto your map, making sure to include a key that shows which colour represents which designation. We recommend that you use dark shades to represent these nationally important things. Then do the same thing for *local level designations*, and again transfer this information to your map. We suggest that you use lighter shades to represent these designations.

The MAGIC map method	The proposals map method
Use the same approach, but tick all of the relevant other things (you can only do 20 at a time, so this may take several runs)	Find all other designations that apply to your neighbourhood

Write a few paragraphs about the designations: you can get this through an internet search, or else your planning officer can suggest data sources. For instance...



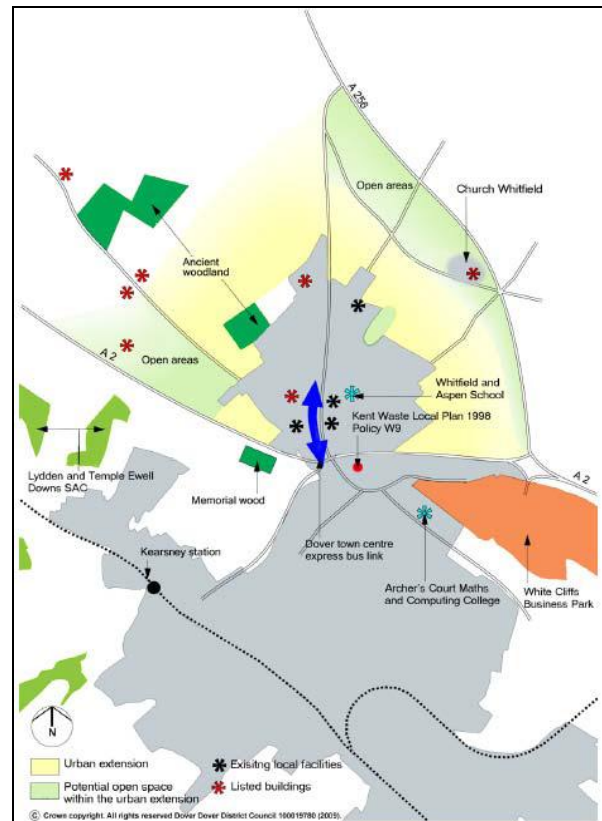
St. Lawrence's Church

There are four churches in the Parish. St. Lawrence's Church (Church of England), situated at the north end of North Hinksey Village next to Diocesan House (formerly the vicarage), is the mother church of the Parish. It holds a morning service and evensong each Sunday, and a coffee morning once a month.

North Hinksey
Parish Plan

On the map, add the location of local facilities and services (not all of these will be relevant):

- Health: hospitals, health centres/ primary care trusts, mental health facilities, drug treatment centres, ambulance services
- Education: further, higher, secondary, primary, nursery
- Public transport: Park&Ride sites, bus stops/ routes, railway station, ports, airports
- 'Social infrastructure': community facilities such as village/community halls, supported accommodation, places of worship, prisons
- Employment: business parks, shopping areas etc.
- 'Green infrastructure': public open space, outdoor recreational/sports facilities, parks, allotments, orchards, canals, lakes, ponds
- Public services: libraries, cemeteries, waste disposal, emergency services
- Flood defences



Constraints and opportunities: Whitfield Urban Extension

Write a few paragraphs about the different facilities: what services do they provide? are they well used? are they in good shape? For instance...

The Public Hall is in Bullwood Lane. Back from the brink after nearly being destroyed by vandals, this is now a thriving venue. A together on Sunday afternoon' club meets weekly. (Hockley Parish Plan)

Find out about air, water and soil

Your planning officer will be able to answer the following questions, or will know whom you can ask to find out this information:

- Are there any *Air Quality Management Areas* in our neighbourhood, and are any expected in the future? (The planner will be able to explain what an AQMA is, and why any AQMAs have been designated)
- Are there any *problems with water quality or wastewater* in our neighbourhood?
- Are we in an area that is *prone to flooding*?
- Are we in an area where *water resources / supply are a problem*?
- Is there any *contaminated land* in our neighbourhood?
- Is there *high quality agricultural land* in our neighbourhood?

Write down (and map where appropriate) the answers, even if they are all 'no'.

Find out about population and human health

General information about population, deprivation, employment etc. can be found in the right hand column ('neighbourhood summary') of

www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissem/ination/. The left-hand column ('find

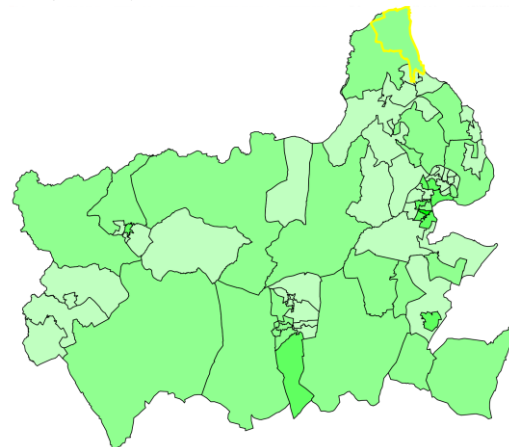
statistics for an area') provides a lot of additional data. Much of this is rather old and it is easy to get overwhelmed by the amount of data available, but the indices of multiple deprivation 2010 might be worth a look.

Health data by local authority can be found at www.apho.org.uk/default.aspx?QN=HP_FIND_SARCH. The 'at a glance' information on the first page could form the basis of your report's section on health. For instance...

Index of Multiple Deprivation Score (Score, Areas, Jan10)

from dataset: Indices of Deprivation 2010 for Super Output Areas

Vale of White Horse 002F (Super Output Area Lower Layer) within Vale of White Horse (Non-Metropolitan District)



Map shading shows how areas on the map compare to each other

Legend - score

Vale of White Horse 002F (Super Output Area Lower Layer) 8.94

Vale of White Horse (Non-Metropolitan District) ...

1.28 - 7.97

7.98 - 14.67

14.68 - 21.37

21.38 - 28.07

28.08 - 34.77

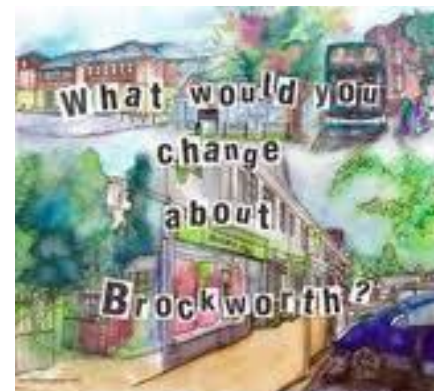
Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 for North Hinksey Super Output Area

The health of people in the Vale of the White Horse is generally better than the England average. Deprivation levels are low and life expectancy is high. However, the rate of new cases of malignant melanoma skin cancer is the highest in England. There are health inequalities within the Vale of White Horse. Life expectancy in the most deprived areas is 4 years lower for men, and almost 3 years lower for women, compared to the least deprived areas.

Ask local residents about what they value and worry about, and think about future changes

Official statistics only give a limited view of the characteristics of your neighbourhood. This needs to be supplemented with information and views from local residents. What do people care about? What do they worry about? What are the particular concerns of young people, people from ethnic minorities etc?

The legislation also requires information about likely future changes that will occur even without a new neighbourhood plan – the 'business as usual' scenario of continuing with normal planning policies but without the new plan. This could include development that has already been approved but not yet built, planned school or library closures, expected changes to the infrastructure etc.



Brockworth Parish Plan

There are different ways of gathering this information. Here are some ideas:

- Ask residents – including children and young people – to take *photographs* of their favourite parts of the neighbourhood and explain why they chose those things.
- Call a meeting and ask residents to *mark on a map* what they like (in green pen) and dislike (in red pen) about the neighbourhood. Also have them mark (in blue pen) things that they believe will change in the future even if there is no neighbourhood plan.



Thorntree Planning for Real

- Send out a *survey* asking people what they like and dislike, and why; and what they believe will change in the future.

Other ideas are available at www.community-blueprint.co.uk/ or the CABA list of tools (page 2).

ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING			
<p>Our environment is of great concern to us – see far right. Also 82% think that trees in the Conservation Area should be protected, with 66% regarding it as very important.</p> <p>50% of us are concerned about noise pollution arising from the traffic on the A361 and B4477. Aircraft noise upsets some but is ignored by others.</p> <p>33% feel strongly about path and verge maintenance, but signposting is of little concern. Some would like more road lighting. More parking spaces</p>	<p>are required – 14% consider it to be very important to provide more for properties without parking.</p> <p>23% regard energy conservation as very important, with a third of us having a strong preference for less obtrusive and more reliable underground power cables.</p> <p>61% think it important (and 40% very important) to strengthen planning controls within the Conservation Area, including limiting 'permitted development' alterations.</p>	<p>Over 50% of us think that it is very important that any future development be limited to small-scale within current boundaries. 27% would prefer only individual houses within existing boundaries and 33% think there should be a small estate of affordable houses for local people. However, 31% of people want no development.</p> <p>Local clubs and societies are of great importance to 30% of respondents, and the Village Hall is recognised by over half of us as providing a very important focal point in the village.</p>	<p>More than 80% think it very important to protect the stone 'plank' slab walls and dry-stone walls and to preserve the local building style and materials.</p>

Filkins Parish Plan

Speeding and volume of traffic have long been issues in the village. Village Road is notorious as a 'rat run'. There are numerous possible solutions but we are bound by what the Highways Department of Bedford Borough Council say can be done. The Parish Council was not in favour of the traffic calming scheme, involving chicanes and prioritisation, suggested by the late County Council for Village Road. There were various reasons why the small bridge at the bottom of Village Road could not be 'calmed'. Bromham Parish Plan

Compile all of this into a coherent chapter

So far, this step has involved collecting different kinds of data. Now the data needs to be organised in a structured way. Start by presenting the map (not forgetting the key to the map), and then organise the remaining information by the bullet points at the beginning of this chapter.

Legally, the SA report must also identify any existing problems in the area. This could include legal standards that are exceeded, aspects of the neighbourhood that local residents are unhappy about, or ways in which the neighbourhood is changing 'in the wrong direction'. This could be shown in a 'SWOT' analysis:

- **Strengths** are things that are good at the moment
- **Weaknesses** are things that are bad at the moment (existing problems)
- **Opportunities** are chances for future improvement
- **Threats** are things that could make the situation worse in the future

Table 4 shows an example of a SWOT analysis. This could act as a conclusion and summary to your chapter.

Table 4. Example of a SWOT analysis for landscape

Strengths Green Belt on the north side of the parish gives an open feel Excellent views of the city from Raleigh Park North Pinksey conservation area has attractive thatched roof buildings	Weaknesses The shopping area is very bland and generic looking The entrance to the Filford estate is unattractive and unwelcoming Pylons dominate the Ducks Pond estate and nature area
Opportunities Redevelopment of the shopping area would allow the area to look more modern and interesting The annual OxClean litter pick could be expanded to a monthly event	Threats Large wind turbine proposed for near the Park and Ride would tower over the eastern part of the parish Housing planned for Lime Road will make the area feel more urban

STEP 3. IDENTIFYING POSSIBLE THINGS TO INCLUDE IN YOUR PLAN

What materials are needed? Meeting room for public meeting(s) and/or materials for a survey of local residents

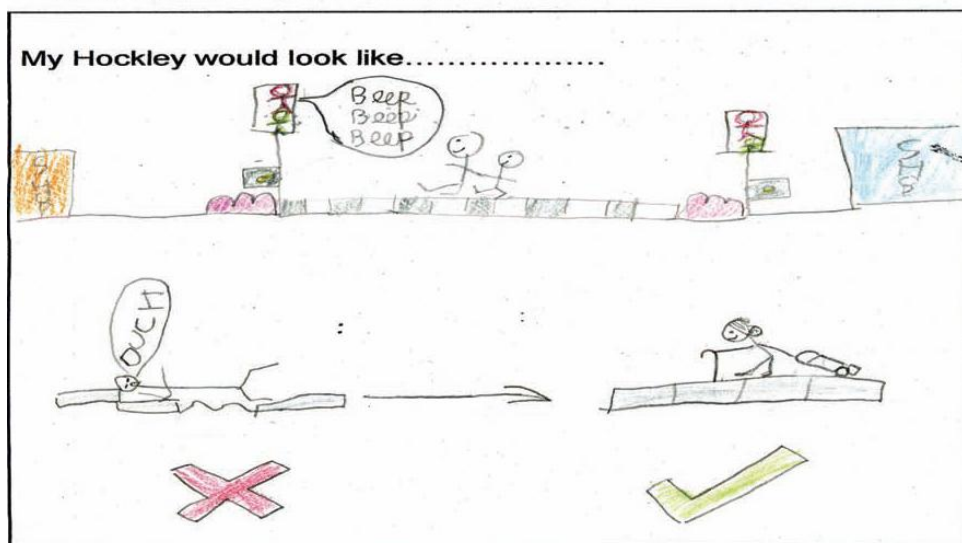
Why is this needed? Article 5.1 and Schedule 2 h) of the [Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004](#)

By now, you should be just starting to think about what could go into your plan, having identified what the plan must and cannot do, and the constraints, problems and opportunities of your neighbourhood. Your plan should provide a strong vision of the kind of place that you want your neighbourhood to be in the future. The step of identifying what could be in your neighbourhood plan *must* be done with as many members of the community as possible, ideally through meetings or else through other approaches such as surveys, with the aim of being as inclusive as possible. Inadequate consideration of alternatives has, to date, been the most frequent SA-related reason for plans being legally quashed.

Once you have figured out the different topics (e.g. housing, nature conservation, parking) that you want to include in your neighbourhood plan, you will also need to identify different ways of dealing with them. These are called 'alternatives'. The policy context and characterisation steps (steps 1 and 2) may well have triggered ideas about reasonable alternatives. Ideas could include:

- 'business as usual': what would happen if there was no neighbourhood plan and you just relied on the Core Strategy and other DPDs (or your council's local plan)
- different ways of dealing with existing environmental, social or economic problems
- different ways of grasping opportunities or responding to threats from the SWOT analysis
- ideas suggested by local residents as part of the survey or public meetings
- ways of implementing your local authority's development plan in your neighbourhood

Draw a picture or write about what you would like to see in your village



Hockley parish plan

Other questions that may generate ideas for the plan are:

- How much of X do we need? (X could be retail facilities, open space, housing etc.)
- What is the best way of providing for demand for X?
- What should the future of area Y be?
- What are the most appropriate activities for area Y, and under what circumstances should the activities be allowed to go ahead?
- How can existing activity Z be made more sustainable? (Z could be commuting, travel to school, food growing, shopping etc.)
- How can service/goods W be delivered in a more sustainable manner? (W could be energy, employment, library or educational provision etc.)
- What is the best location for project V? (V could be affordable housing, employment site for small local businesses, new doctor's surgery etc.)



Birkenhead Town Talk

Examples of alternatives

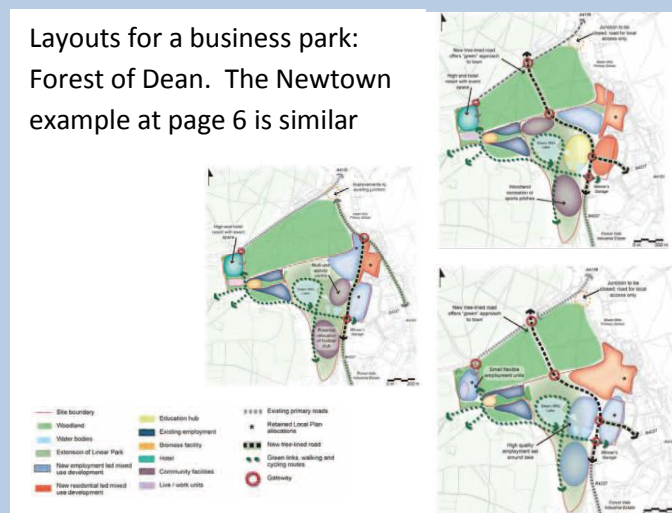
Different uses for an undeveloped part of the neighbourhood: Castle Bytham Parish Plan

- Additional housing
- Business park
- Nature reserve
- Health centre
- Leisure facilities



Laverstock & Ford Parish Plan

Layouts for a business park:
Forest of Dean. The Newtown example at page 6 is similar



Options for accommodating new homes:
Hockley Parish Plan

- Building on greenbelt
- Replacing houses with flats
- Building n existing plots
- Infilling with mini roads
- Satellite village
- Small groups of houses
- Large housing estates
- No further development

Write down what you have done to identify reasonable alternatives. Later chapters of the SA will 'tell the story' of how alternatives have been identified and rejected.

STEP 4. PREPARING AN 'SA SCOPING REPORT' AND CONSULTING ON IT

What materials are needed? Computer

Why is this needed? Regulation 12.5 and Schedule 2 h) of the [Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004](#)

You now need to consult with your local authority and 'statutory consultees' to make sure that they think you are including the right information in your SA and that it is at the right level of detail. The statutory consultees are:

- Natural England
 - English Heritage
 - Environment Agency
 - nature conservation
 - heritage
 - air, water, soil
- which is responsible for:

We suggest that you write an 'SA scoping report', pass it to your local authority planning officer, and ask them to consult with the statutory consultees on your behalf. The box below is a template for this report.

Title page

Table of contents

Chapter 1. Introduction and methodology (roughly 2 pages)

Explain that this is the draft SA report for your neighbourhood plan, which aims to fulfil the requirements of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004⁹.

Provide information on:

- The area covered by your neighbourhood plan (include a map)
- The contents and main objectives of your plan, to the extent that you know them
- Who has been involved in writing the plan and carrying out the SA
- The 'story' of your SA so far. This could be in the form of a table such as Table 5.

Table 5. Template for a table summarising the SA process

Date	What we did	Who was involved	Problems that we faced
4 Jan. 11	Initial meeting of SA team to discuss SA methodology	J. Robinson, M. Hughes ...	none
8-10 Jan. 11	Read consultation Core Strategy, summarised how it applies to our neighbourhood	F. Mayes, A. Kahn	Core Strategy is only in consultation form and may still change in the future
...

⁹ In Wales, [Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes \(Wales\) Regulations 2004](#)

Include as much information as possible about who was involved, what their views were etc. Also include information about any problems that you faced: this is a legal requirement.

Conclude the chapter by explaining that

- Chapter 2 describes the policy context (Schedule 2(a) and (e) of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004)
- Chapter 3 describes the environmental context (Schedule 2(b) – 2(d))
- Chapter 4 describes the alternatives considered so far (Schedule 2(h))
- Chapter 5 describes your proposed next steps

Chapter 2. Policy context (roughly 2-3 pages)

Explain what local plan(s) you reviewed, also any other documents that you looked at so far. Include Table 2 here, as well as the bullet-point list of national government guidance.

Chapter 3. Sustainability context (roughly 8-15 pages plus a big map)

Start by explaining how you collected the information for this chapter. Then include and explain your map; include the rest of the environmental, social and economic data that you collected; explain how things might change in the future if your neighbourhood plan was not prepared (the 'business as usual' situation); and present your SWOT analysis. List any problems that you faced in collecting your data.

Chapter 4. Alternatives (roughly 2-3 pages)

Explain how you went about identifying alternatives, and then list the alternatives.

Chapter 5. Next steps (roughly 2-3 pages)

Skim through the rest of this guidance note to find out what you will be doing after this. Then summarise these next steps in Chapter 5. The statutory consultees will be particularly interested in

- The 'SA framework' of Table 7, since that sets the structure for the rest of your impact assessment
- The area that could be affected by your plan (for instance whether changes to a shopping centre in your neighbourhood could affect other areas), and the time period of your plan (say 10 or 15 years). They will want to make sure that your assessment considers your plan's impacts even if they occur outside your neighbourhood or if they are far in the future.

Once your SA scoping report is completed, forward it to your local planning officer. You need to give the statutory consultees at least 5 weeks in which to comment on your draft report. **Do not proceed to Step 5 during that time.**

If you do get any comments back from the statutory consultees, you do not *have* to do what they suggest, but you should at least think carefully about their comments. Keep a note of what the consultees say and how you have responded to their comments. Table 6 could be a framework for this.

Table 6. Template for a table summarising statutory consultee comments and your responses

Date comment was received	Who sent the comment	Comment	How we responded to the comment
3 Feb. 2011	Natural England	Look at your Local Biodiversity Action Plan, which includes information about bats in your area	We looked at the LBAP and have included information about bats at Section 3.x of our SA report
5 Feb. 2011	English Heritage	You should include reference to Planning Policy Statement 15 in Chapter 2 of your draft SA report	Our local Core Strategy already interprets how PPS15 applies to the local level. Our draft plan refers to the Core Strategy. We do not feel that it is necessary to also refer to PPS15
...			

STEP 5. ASSESSING THE IMPACTS OF THE ALTERNATIVES AND CHOOSING PREFERRED ALTERNATIVES

What materials are needed? Printouts of blank 'SA frameworks' (Table 7), printouts of the alternatives being considered, copies of Chapter 3 of your draft SA report including the big map, meeting rooms for public meetings

Why is this needed? Schedule 2 f) and 2g) of the [Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004](#)

Step 5 has several aims:

- Where there are several distinct options for something in the plan (say whether to promote affordable housing at site A or site B), then Step 5 can help to identify the best option;
- Where there is disagreement or uncertainty about whether something should be included in the plan (say changes to the shopping area), then Step 5 can guide the decision as to whether the plan should include it or not;
- In either case, Step 5 can help to suggest new alternatives (perhaps including some aspects of other alternatives), fine-tuning of alternatives that would have a negative impact, or further improvements where an alternative's positive impacts could be made even better;
- Step 5 shows how decisions about the plan have been made.

Assessment of alternatives

The most straightforward way of undertaking this step is to use an 'SA framework'. This is a series of questions which ensure that systematic consideration is given to all of the possible environmental, social and economic impacts of the alternatives. Table 7 is a template SA framework. Topics shaded in blue are those suggested by SEA legislation, but for a well-rounded SA you may also want to add others (such as employment, education and equalities).

The assessment of alternatives **must be done as a group exercise**, involving as many people as possible. You may want to ask a planning officer, or someone else who is impartial, to chair these meetings. Working in groups, review Chapter 3 of your draft SA report to remind you of the characteristics of your neighbourhood now, and in the future without the plan. Also remind yourselves of the key points of the local authority's Development Plan Documents and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. Then, for each alternative or set of alternatives, fill in blank copies of the SA framework, using the following rules:

- Ask yourself whether all of the assessment questions are relevant for the alternatives being assessed, and eliminate those that aren't. For instance, requiring new developments to provide some of their energy from on-site renewable would not affect water, population or human health: cross those topics out when you assess that alternative.
- If the alternatives are spatial – if they can be mapped – then draw them on the map. Think about where their impacts might be felt: from where they might be seen, or over what distance they might affect traffic movements. Make sure to include any impacts that would occur outside your neighbourhood. Draw these 'zones of impact' on the map. **If any**

alternative or its 'zone of impact' could possibly affect something with a national or local designation – see Table 3 – then discuss this with your local planning officer.

- Discuss, for each assessment question, whether the alternative would have a good or bad impact compared to the situation without the neighbourhood plan. Consider when the impacts would happen (short, medium or long term) and whether they would be permanent or temporary¹⁰. Also consider whether other developments that are already planned for your neighbourhood or nearby areas will also affect the baseline situation (for instance traffic levels). You may need to stop and collect more information before you can complete the assessment. Write down your conclusions **and reasoning** in the cells in the SA

Table 7. Example of 'SA framework'

Assessment question: Compared to what would happen if there was no neighbourhood plan, what would be the alternative's impact on...*	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Nature conservation: green spaces, hedges, trees, ponds etc.			
Landscape and heritage: the character of your area, views, any listed buildings, attractive landscape or townscape, conservation areas, archaeology, customs			
Air and climate: traffic levels, use of energy, production of renewable energy etc.			
Water: water quality, water provision and use of water, wastewater treatment, flooding			
Soil: greenfield land, food production (particularly food that is eaten locally), allotments, contaminated areas etc.			
Population: homes for current and future residents including Gypsies and Travellers, social facilities such as community centres etc.			
Human health: green areas, walking and cycling facilities, sports facilities, health facilities etc.			
Infrastructure and other facilities (material assets): energy, waste, transport, education, libraries etc. (this could be split into several separate rows with sub-components. For instance transport could include access to public transport, provision of cycle and walkways, car dependency and congestion)			
Employment and skills: jobs, local and small businesses, employment sites, skills and training etc.			
Groups that have traditionally been disadvantaged (Equalities): children and young people, older people, women, Black and ethnic minority people, people with disabilities, gay, lesbian and transsexual people, people with different religions and beliefs, etc.			
Conclusion: Ideas for how to improve the alternative . If the neighbourhood plan was to include this alternative, what kind of changes or fine-tuning should be made to the alternative?			

* Impacts shaded in blue are legally required

¹⁰ The glossary explains these terms

framework. You may want to use 'traffic light' colours to summarise the kind of impact: green for good, red for bad, amber for in between.

- As you go along, ask yourselves whether the alternative can be improved at all ('avoidance and mitigation'), particularly where it could have a large negative permanent impact. Add that information to the last row of the framework.



Here is an example:

Assessment question:	Alternative 1: retain two primary schools	Alternative 2: merge primary schools onto the site of the larger school, using the adjacent field as a site for the school expansion
Nature conservation: green spaces, hedges, trees, ponds etc.	No impact	We think that the field next to the larger school does not have any special nature conservation interest, but will check this with the council's biodiversity officer.
Landscape and heritage: the character of your area, views, any listed buildings, attractive landscape or townscape, conservation areas, archaeology, customs	No impact	The extension of the larger school would be visible from about 20 houses. The impact during construction would be short term and acute. During operation it would be long term but minor. The impact of the closure of the smaller school depends on what happens to that site afterwards, but it will probably be negative
Air and climate: traffic levels, use of energy, production of renewable energy etc.	No impact	The larger school is closer to where most children come from, but there will still be a negative impact from children who would previously have gone to the closer, smaller school and would now need to travel further to go to school.
...		
Conclusion: Ideas for how to improve the alternative . If the neighbourhood plan was to include this alternative, what kind of changes or fine-tuning should be made to the alternative?	Nature conservation could be improved by including a wild-flower area at either school.	Nature conservation could be improved by including a pond as part of the school extension, though would need to consider safety. The new playing fields could be seeded at least partly with wildflowers.
	Climate and traffic impacts could be reduced through a school bus for the neighbourhood, and by providing information for parents on how to get to the new larger school by walking and cycling	

A key aim of SA is to identify ways of avoiding or minimising any negative impacts of the plan. Avoidance means changing the plan so that it has no impacts (for instance putting new homes in a location where they do not affect a wildlife area). Mitigation means changing it to make its impacts smaller (for instance putting up fencing between new homes and a wildlife area to reduce the impact of light and noise from the homes).

Choice and explanation of preferred alternative

You do not have to choose the 'greenest' alternatives for your neighbourhood plan: there may be very good reasons for preferring something else. You can also choose to take forward a variant of the alternatives that you assessed. But **your decision must 'take account' of the findings of the SA, and the final SA report must include an explanation of why you made the decisions that you did**, for instance:



Compton & Shawford Parish Plan

We support the closure of the smaller primary school because it will allow facilities at the new, joint school to be improved. The larger school can also be used in the evenings by community groups: neither of the current schools is large enough to allow this.

The new school should include a wildflower area (but not a pond) to improve nature conservation, and should include photovoltaics or a small wind turbine to generate some of its energy requirements. A safe cycle and walking route will be developed to the new enlarged school.

The assessment tables will be an appendix to your final SA report. The explanations of why you chose your preferred options will come into the main body of the report.

You may need to do several rounds of assessment as new alternatives are proposed or existing ones are refined to include avoidance and mitigation measures. **If you publish a draft neighbourhood plan, the assessment tables for the draft plan should be published alongside the plan**, so that people can see what the plan's impacts would be.

STEP 6. FINE-TUNING THE PLAN TO MINIMISE ITS IMPACTS

What materials are needed? Computer

Why is this needed? Schedule 2 f) and 2g) of the [Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004](#)

The total impacts of your draft neighbourhood plan may well go beyond simply the sum of the impacts of each preferred alternative. At this near-final stage, you should take an overview of the plan as a whole, and fine-tune it to minimise its overall impacts. In particular, you should check to make sure that the plan does not make worse things that are already bad, or have a particularly large impact on groups that are already deprived. You may again want to involve your local authority planning officer at this stage, to provide an impartial overview.

Start by summarising all of the assessments of preferred alternatives in one table like Table 7. If any actions have not yet been assessed, assess them using Table 7, add those tables to the appendix, and summarise the findings in Table 8. The final 'cumulative impacts' column summarises what the overall impact of the draft neighbourhood plan will be. It should not necessarily be an average of the assessments of the individual actions: some actions may have a much bigger impact (positive or negative) than others. In Table 8, for instance, the negative landscape impacts of new homes are so severe that they outweigh the positive landscape impacts of modernising the shopping centre.

Table 8. Example of summary assessment table

Impact	Action									
	1. Merge primary schools	2. Cycle path between schools	3. Modernise shopping centre	4. Affordable homes at site X	5. Affordable homes at site Y	6. Renewable energy at new developments	7. New allotments at Z	Cumulative impacts
Nature conservation	Red			Yellow	Red		Yellow			Red
Landscape and heritage	Yellow		Green	Red	Red	Red	Yellow			Red
Air and climate	Red	Green		Red	Yellow	Green				Yellow
Water				Red	Red					Red
Soil					Red		Green			
Population	Yellow			Green	Green					Green
Human health	Yellow	Green					Green			Green
Material assets	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green		Yellow			Green
Employment and skills	Green									
Equalities	Yellow	Green			Red		Green			Yellow

Now consider the summary table from several different angles, shown in each case by the blue arrow:

Do any actions have a particularly large number of negative impacts? If so, you may want to consider whether that action really should be included in the neighbourhood plan, or whether it can be changed to reduce its negative impacts. For instance, should the development be made smaller or larger? Should it have associated infrastructure?

Impact	Action								Cumulative impacts
	1. Merge primary	2. Cycle path	3. Modernise	4. Affordable	5. Affordable	6. Renewable	7. New allotments	...	
Nature conservation	Red				Red				Red
Landscape and heritage	Red				Red				Red
Air and climate	Red	Green			Red	Green			Red
Water					Red				Red
Soil					Red				Red
Population	Yellow				Green				Green
Human health	Yellow	Green			Green				Green
Material assets					Green		Yellow		Green
Employment and skills					Green				Green
Equalities	Yellow	Green			Red		Green		Yellow

Are there any particularly negative cumulative impacts, either on an environmental, social or economic aspect or on any groups of people (for instance young people)? If so, can anything be done about this? For instance, can actions be added that deal with the problem (e.g. make the landscape more attractive), or parts of the plan be removed that cause the problem?

Impact	Action								Cumulative impacts
	1. Merge primary	2. Cycle path	3. Modernise	4. Affordable	5. Affordable	6. Renewable	7. New allotments	...	
Nature conservation	Red				Red				Red
Landscape and heritage	Red				Red				Red
Air and climate	Red	Green			Red	Green			Red
Water					Red				Red
Soil					Red				Red
Population	Yellow				Green				Green
Human health	Yellow	Green			Green				Green
Material assets					Green		Yellow		Green
Employment and skills					Green				Green
Equalities	Yellow	Green			Red		Green		Yellow

Are some impacts/issues not fully addressed by the plan, where most or all of the actions would have no impact? If so, should the plan be changed to include something about that issue? For instance, if the plan has few impacts on human health, should it include more actions related to walking and cycling, green areas or provision of health facilities?

Impact	Action								Cumulative impacts
	1. Merge primary	2. Cycle path	3. Modernise	4. Affordable	5. Affordable	6. Renewable	7. New allotments	...	
Nature conservation	Red				Red				Red
Landscape and heritage	Red				Red				Red
Air and climate	Red	Green			Red	Green			Red
Water					Red				Red
Soil					Red				Red
Population	Yellow				Green				Green
Human health	Yellow	Green			Green				Green
Material assets					Green		Yellow		Green
Employment and skills					Green				Green
Equalities	Yellow	Green			Red		Green		Yellow

As you think about final improvements to your plan, you may want to also consider the following questions. They are not strictly SA-related but may provide you with further ideas:

- Can any of this be *done voluntarily, or by local people or businesses*? For instance, should the contract for the cycle path go to a local business if this would not conflict with issues of probity and nepotism? Can the disused field be turned into allotments with the help of volunteers? The more that is done locally, the more likely the benefits of development are to stay in the local community.
- Are there ways of getting *multiple benefits out of a single development or facility*? For instance can the village hall be used as a venue for evening classes? Can the community orchard also contain a keep-fit trail?
- Can the neighbourhood be made *more resilient to future shocks* such as flooding, power outages, heavy snowfall, petrol or gas shortages, economic shocks, food shortages, diseases such as foot-and-mouth or avian flu?

This fine-tuning is an important legal requirement of the SA Directive. Be thorough and keep track of the changes that you make to your plan as a result of this step.

STEP 7. PREPARING A FINAL SA REPORT

What materials are needed? Computer

Why is this needed? Schedule 2 i), Article 5 and Article 6 of the [Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004](#)

SA report

The final SA report is a continuation of your SA scoping report, but with extra material added: information about everything that you have done since you wrote the draft SA report. If your parish council or neighbourhood group has a website, the final SA and plan should be published there, as well as on the local authority website. The final report also needs to include information about how the impacts of your plan will be monitored as the plan is put into action. The box below shows, in blue, what information needs to be added at this stage.

Title page

Table of contents

Chapter 1. Introduction and methodology (roughly 3 pages)

Explain that this is the draft SA report for your neighbourhood plan, which aims to fulfil the requirements of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. Provide information on:

- The area covered by your neighbourhood plan
- The contents and main objectives of your plan
- Who has been involved in writing the plan and carrying out the SA
- The full 'story' of your SA: update Table 5 (what we did, who was involved etc.) and Table 6 (consultation comments)
- Problems that you faced in carrying out your SA, for instance limitations of the baseline data, or problems faced in involving certain groups in the assessment process
- The structure of the rest of your report

Chapter 2. Policy context (roughly 3 pages)

Explain what local plan(s) you reviewed, also any other documents that you looked at so far. Include Table 1 here. Update with any information suggested by the consultees and any policy changes that have happened since the draft SA report.

Chapter 3. Sustainability context (roughly 8-15 pages plus a big map)

Start by explaining how you collected the information for this chapter. Then explain your map and include it as an appendix; and then include the rest of the baseline information that you collected including the SWOT analysis. Update with any information suggested by the consultees and any policy changes since the draft SA report.

Chapter 4. Alternatives (roughly 2-3 pages)

Explain how you went about identifying alternatives, and then list the alternatives.

Chapter 5. Assessment of alternatives (roughly 5-10 pages)

Introduce the assessment table (Table 7) and explain how you carried out the assessment of alternatives. Document not only positive and negative impacts, but also (at least briefly) any short, medium and long term impacts, permanent and negative impacts, and any impacts on neighbouring areas. The filled-in assessment tables will probably be so long that they are best included in an appendix rather than in the main text of the report. Explain why, in each case, you chose the preferred alternative (this explanation is very important – don't skimp on it and be honest).

Chapter 6. Fine-tuning of the plan (roughly 5 pages)

Present your summary table (Table 8). Explain how you analysed the table (for instance in a group or as individuals, and what questions you asked). Explain what changes you made to the plan in response to your analysis.

Chapter 7. Next steps (roughly 2-3 pages)

Explain that, after the plan is adopted, its significant impacts will be monitored, and explain how they will be monitored. Include Table 9 below. Explain that this SA report will now be made available for public comment alongside the draft neighbourhood plan for 6 weeks. Invite comments on the plan and SA report, and provide an address where the comments can be sent.

Appendix

Assessment tables

Non-technical summary (roughly 5 pages)

This is a short version of the information from the rest of the SA. Make sure to summarise the contents of the SA (main alternatives considered, main impacts etc.), and not just how you have gone about carrying out the SA.

Yes, SA reports are often longer than the plan, which sounds frustrating and illogical. But the SA report tells the story of your plan: it explains why you made the choices that you did and how your plan evolved. It explains to people who have not been involved in the development of the plan, and who may not be happy with some aspects of the plan, why the plan looks the way it does. It is a buffer against legal challenge. So **be thorough and honest, particularly in explaining how you carried out the SA, what alternatives were considered, how you took people's views into account, why you chose the alternatives that you did, and how you fine-tuned the plan.**

Monitoring

The legislation requires plan-makers to monitor the significant effects of their plans. Most or all of the monitoring for your neighbourhood plan will be carried out by your local authority or at the national level. However some impacts might warrant local level monitoring, and you may want to do this anyway to make sure that your neighbourhood plan works the way that you want it to. The following questions can help you to think about what might need to be monitored, and Table 9 is a template for how this can be documented:

- Is the development proposed in the neighbourhood plan being built?
- Does the development look like it was intended to look?
- Is the development leading to any environmental thresholds being exceeded, for instance air quality standards or destruction of designated habitats?
- Where the SA report predicted that significant negative effects would happen (those in red in Table 8), are they happening?
- Is the development causing any unintended problems like congestion or noise?
- Are people in the neighbourhood acting like the SA expected them to act – for instance, do they actually use the new playground? Do they bring their children to school by car or do they walk them to school?
- Are any outside changes happening that are affecting the plan and its impacts, for instance unexpected flooding, unexpected other projects such as a new road, or reorganisation of local schools?

We recommend that you talk to your local authority planning officer when you are developing your monitoring programme, since they will know what is already being monitored, and what makes sense to additionally monitor. Where possible, existing monitoring information should be used, to save money and be consistent with other plans' monitoring arrangements.

Table 9. Template for monitoring the effects of your neighbourhood strategy

What needs to be monitored	Who will monitor	How often will this be monitored	What response should there be if monitoring shows problems
How children are travelling to the merged primary school	School	Yearly survey of children as part of curriculum	If more than 50% of children come by car, children will deliver leaflets to parents
Whether the changes to the shopping centre are leading to parking problems on nearby roads	County Council	Monthly	...
...			

Congratulations – you are done!

When you have completed your SA report, you need to send it to your local planning authority alongside your draft neighbourhood plan. It will be part of the information on which the local referendum will be held, and that the independent examiner will look at.

We hope that this guidance has been helpful. It is a work in progress, and we would love to hear whether you found it helpful, and any ideas that you have for improving it. Our contact details are on the first page.



Oakthorpe, Donisthorpe and Acresford Parish Plan

GLOSSARY

Alternative	Other reasonable option in addition to the preferred option. Could include 'business as usual' or 'no plan'
Avoidance (of impacts)	Changing the plan so that it has no impacts (for instance putting new homes in a location where they do not affect a wildlife area).
Consultation	The process by which statutory bodies and any member of the public who is concerned by the effects of implementing the plan can make comments on the report
Cumulative impact	Impacts that result from incremental changes caused by other past, present or future actions associated with the project
Effect	Change resulting from a plan's implementation
Impact	See 'Effect'
Localism Bill	Introduced to Parliament in December 2010. It covers a wide range of issues, including planning reform to give more planning power to local communities and neighbourhoods rather than imposing targets from the top. It is expected that the Bill will receive Royal Assent in late 2011
Long term impact	An effect that would occur in the later stages of plan implementation (roughly after 10-plus years)
Mitigation (of impacts)	Changing the plan to make its impacts smaller (for instance putting up fencing between new homes and a wildlife area to reduce the impact of light and noise from the homes). Often used to also cover avoidance and offsetting of impacts.
Neighbourhood Plan	Town and Parish councils or neighbourhood forums can use their new neighbourhood planning powers to establish general planning policies for the development and use of land in their neighbourhood. This will be known legally as a Neighbourhood Development Plan.
Offset (of impacts)	Providing a positive impact that aims to balance out a negative impact (for instance provision of a new habitat to replace one that will be destroyed)
Option	See 'Alternatives'
Permanent impact	An irreversible consequence or effect of the plan
Scoping	The process of identifying the issues to be addressed and deciding the level of detail that the plan/SA should cover. It ensures focus on the important issues and avoids those that are considered to be not significant.
Secondary impact	Effects that are not a direct result of the plan, but occur away from the original effect or as a result of a complex pathway e.g. changes to the water table impacts ecology nearby
Short term impact	An effect that would occur in the earlier stages of plan implementation (roughly in the first five years). Construction impacts are typically short term
Significant effects	Measure of the importance or gravity of an environmental effect, defined by the context of a plan and any available significance criteria. Criteria for assessing significance in SAs is set out in Annex II of the SEA Directive.
Statutory consultees	Authorities which, because of their environmental responsibilities, are likely to be concerned by the effects of implementing plans and must therefore be

	<p>consulted at specified stages of the SA. In England they are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English Heritage, www.english-heritage.org.uk/ • Environment Agency, www.environment-agency.gov.uk/ • Natural England, www.naturalengland.org.uk/
Sustainable development	Development that meets the needs of the present population without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs
Sustainability appraisal	A form of assessment used in the UK, particularly for regional and local planning, since the 1990s. It considers social and economic effects as well as environmental ones, and appraises them in relation to the aims of sustainable development. It typically also meets the requirements of the SEA Directive.
Strategic environmental assessment	Generic term used to describe environmental assessment as applied to policies, plans and programmes. In this guide, 'SEA' is used to refer to the type of environmental assessment required under the SEA Directive.
Temporary impact	An effect/consequence associated with the plan that has a finite duration, after which pre-plan conditions are restored. Noise is an example of a temporary impact.

APPENDIX A. SUMMARY OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF PLANS AND PROGRAMMES REGULATIONS 2004

Preparing an environmental report in which the likely significant effects on the environment of implementing the plan, and reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan, are identified, described and evaluated. The information to be given is (Reg. 12 and Schedule 2):

- a) An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan, and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes;
- b) The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan;
- c) The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;
- d) Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to the Birds and Habitats Directives;
- e) The environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or national level, which are relevant to the plan and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation;
- f) The likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors. (These effects should include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects);
- g) The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan;
- h) An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information;
- i) a description of measures envisaged concerning monitoring;
- j) a non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings

The report must include the information that may reasonably be required taking into account current knowledge and methods of assessment, the contents and level of detail in the plan, its stage in the decision-making process and the extent to which certain matters are more appropriately assessed at different levels in that process to avoid duplication of the assessment (Reg. 12)

Consulting:

- authorities with environmental responsibilities, when deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information which must be included in the environmental report (Reg. 12.5)
- authorities with environmental responsibilities and the public, to give them an early and effective opportunity within appropriate time frames to express their opinion on the draft plan and the accompanying environmental report before the adoption of the plan (Reg. 13)
- other EU Member States, where the implementation of the plan is likely to have significant effects on the environment in these countries (Reg. 14)

Taking the environmental report and the results of the consultations into account in decision-making (Reg. 8)

Providing information on the decision:

When the plan is adopted, the public and any relevant Member States must be informed and the following made available to those so informed (Reg. 16):

- the plan as adopted
- a statement summarising how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan and how the environmental report, the opinions of statutory consultees, and the results of any consultations with other Member States have been taken into account, and the reasons for choosing the plan as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and
- the measures decided concerning monitoring

Monitoring the significant environmental effects of the plan's implementation (Reg. 17)

This guidance has been prepared by:



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