

MEETING	JOINT PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE
DATE	17 June 2011
TITLE	The SA of the Anglesey and Gwynedd Joint Local Development Plan (JLDP)
RECOMMENDATION	Consider the findings included in Appendices 1-3 of this report as a basis for consultation.
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Joint LDP Planning Policy Committee about the joint Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA) of the Anglesey and Gwynedd Joint LDP (JLDP) and to outline the next steps in the SA process.

2. Background

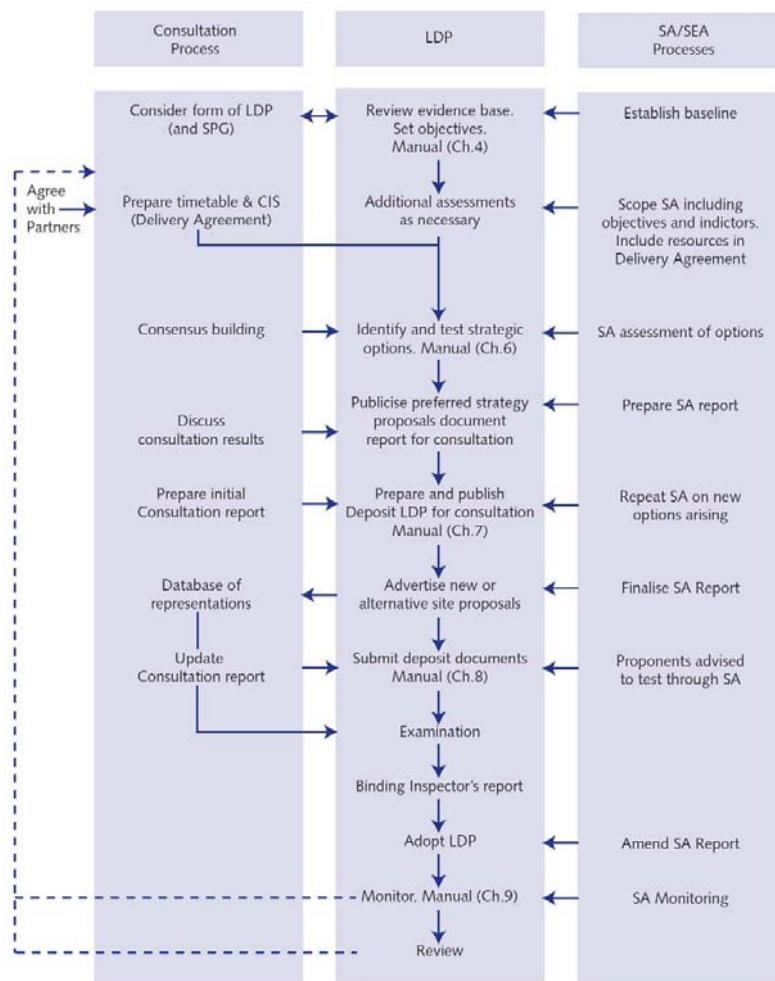
- 2.1 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 makes it a requirement for local planning authorities in Wales to prepare a Local Development Plan (LDP) for their areas. Anglesey County Council and Gwynedd Council have decided to prepare the LDP jointly for Anglesey and Gwynedd Planning Authority areas.
- 2.2 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 also states that the Joint LDP must be the subject of a Sustainability Assessment (SA) and to report on the findings of this work throughout the process of preparing the Plan. The overall aim of SA is to ensure that the JLDP's policies and proposals are consistent with the principles of sustainable development.
- 2.3 In addition to the requirement to undertake a SA of the JLDP, under European Directive 2001/42/EC, which is implemented in the UK via the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004, Local Development Plans should also be subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). SEA is a process to ensure that the significant environmental effects arising from plans and programmes are identified, assessed, mitigated, communicated to decision makers and monitored. The SEA Regulations require that defined environmental issues are covered in the assessment process, namely: biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage, and landscape.
- 2.4 The Welsh Government (WG) advises that for development plans, the requirements of the SEA Directive are best incorporated into Sustainability Appraisals. The statutory requirements of both assessments can be satisfied through the single but integrated Sustainability Appraisal (SA) process. The joint SA and SEA will provide the relevant information for forming appropriate policies in the Joint LDP throughout its preparation process.

2.5 The Planning and Compulsory purchase Act requires that an LDP is “sound” before it is submitted. *Local Development Plan Wales* (LDPW) identifies criteria and tests of soundness for LDPs. The tests of soundness refer to the policy content of LDPs, as well as the processes for LDP production. A number of criteria have been identified to test the soundness of LDPs. One of the tests identified is that the plan and its policies have been subjected to Sustainability Appraisal including Strategic Environmental Assessment.

2.6 The JLDP will also need to be subject to other assessments namely Health Impact Assessment, Equality Impact Assessment and Welsh Language Impact Assessment. The results of these assessments will help to provide the answers to questions set as part of the SA process.

3. The SA Process and the Local Development Plan

3.1 Guidance states that the SA process should start as early as possible, and ideally at the same time as the preparation of the Local Development Plan. The figure below demonstrates how the SA process integrates with each stage of the LDP process.



N.B. Plan preparation, SA and consultation should be undertaken in an integrated manner.

- 3.2 The relevant Regulations identify five main stages in conducting an SA:
- Stage A – setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope;
 - Stage B – developing and refining options and assessing effects;
 - Stage C – preparing the Sustainability Appraisal Report;
 - Stage D – consulting on the preferred option of the development plan and SA Report; and
 - Stage E – monitoring significant effects of implementing the development plan.

4. Progress to Date

- 4.1 As indicated in paragraph 3.2 above, the first main stage of the SA process is setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope (Stage A). Stage A includes the following tasks:

Task A1: Review other relevant policies, plans and programmes, and sustainability objectives

Task A2: Collect baseline and other information

Task A3: Identify sustainability issues and problems

Task A4: Develop the SA Framework for appraising likely significant effects arising from the JLDP; and

Task A5: Consult on the SA framework

- 4.2 The key output of this stage is the production of a Scoping Report. The overarching purpose of this Scoping Report is to create the general framework for the assessment of the JLDP. The Joint Planning Policy Unit is in the process of producing the Scoping Report and has completed tasks A1 – A4 as shown in paragraph 4.1. Appendices 1-3 of this report contains the information gathered for Tasks A2-A4 of the Scoping Report.
- 4.3 An external consultant with expertise in the field has been appointed to check the work throughout the process as well as preparing relevant documents and consulting at appropriate stages with environmental groups on behalf of the Councils.
- 4.4 Once completed, the Scoping Report, will be structured as follows:
- Non-technical Summary
 - Introduction/background to the SA requirement and JLDP
 - SA method, stages of SA and how appraisal will be undertaken

- Theme based presentation of baseline and plans and programmes key issues: Biodiversity, Communities, Climate Change etc.
- SA Framework and proposed indicators
- Statutory consultation process
- Next steps

5. Next Stages

- 5.1 In accordance with the requirements of the SEA Directive, the Councils are required to consult with the three Statutory Consultation Bodies (CADW, Environment Agency and Countryside Council for Wales) for a period of 5 weeks on the contents of the Scoping Report. It is also suggested that the Councils consult other relevant stakeholders as well as the general public.
- 5.2 In accordance with the Delivery Agreement a Sustainability Assessment Task Group will be formed which will include professional officers with an interest and expertise in the relevant fields. The Task Group will provide expert input into various aspects of the SA process beginning with the contents of the Scoping Report. At appropriate times, representatives from specialist organisations will join this Group. The Group will also assist with the work of assessing the effects of relevant parts of the Joint LDP on the social, economic and environmental aspects of the Plan Area. The findings of this Group and the representations received during any consultation period will be presented to the Joint LDP Panel for consideration

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 That the JLDP Committee: consider and approve the findings included in Appendices 1-3 of this Report as a basis for consultation with the Sustainability Task Group, Statutory Consultation Bodies, other stakeholders and the public.