

Barton Farm Development Brief Sustainability Appraisal Summary: December 2007



West Dorset District Council has prepared draft planning guidelines for land at Barton Farm, to guide the phasing and distribution of new building on one of the district's largest development sites, and to provide further detail on design, layout and infrastructure provision.

An essential consideration when developing the planning guidelines is its effect on people's quality of life, the environment and the economy, both now and in the future. Therefore a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) have been carried out alongside the preparation of the plan to make sure these issues have been taken into account at every stage.

This leaflet summarises the findings of the sustainability appraisal and shows how sustainability issues have been incorporated into the brief as a result of the appraisal. More detail can be found in the full Sustainability Appraisal Report, available at www.dorsetforyou.com/bartonfarm. Further information on the processes undertaken, including a short guide to sustainability appraisal can be found at www.dorsetforyou.com/sustainabilityappraisal/west.

Scoping Stage

Before work started on the planning guidelines, we identified all the relevant plans and policies that exist and what information there was on the current condition of the area. This information was essential to predict effects and identify any sustainability issues and possible problems.

Six overarching objectives were drafted to help us compare the options and predict the effects of the planning guidelines set out in the development brief.

Sustainability Appraisal Objectives:

1. Protect and enhance the health and well-being of the population
2. Support development that meets people's needs
3. Provide access to meet people's needs with least damage to communities and the environment
4. Maintain and improve environmental quality and assets
5. Minimise consumption of natural resources
6. Develop the economy in ways that meet people's needs

Comparing Options

There is more than one way of developing Barton Farm, so various different options were considered early on in the production of the planning guidelines. Using the framework developed through the scoping stage each of the potential options was tested for good and bad sustainability impacts. Recommendations were made on the most sustainable options and these suggestions along with the responses to the public consultation events, informed the choice of the final guidelines included in the draft brief.

What difference did the sustainability appraisal make?

- The public consultation showed that there was a lot of concern over possible traffic problems, and the evidence from the sustainability appraisal helped point towards the most sustainable option and suggested additional measures to help.
- The appraisal supported the option of an element of mixed-use development, but the public preferred the option of separate employment and residential land. The appraisal found that mixing the office and light industrial employment in with residential was more sustainable than separating all employment from housing, both in terms of accessibility and reducing the potential for crime and antisocial behaviour. On the basis of this evidence the partial mixed-use option has been put forward in the draft planning guidelines.

Predicting Effects

As the planning guidelines were being drafted, their effects were evaluated using the information gathered in the scoping stage. Measures were suggested to further improve their sustainability.

What are the predicted significant effects of the plan?

Positive Effects:

- The pedestrian and cycle proposals will provide increased accessibility and safety for walkers and cyclists making walking and cycling easy and more attractive, potentially reducing the overall number of car journeys.
- The provision of community facilities on-site will bring strong community and cultural benefits.
- The development of a network of open space will increase accessibility to green space which can promote healthy lifestyles; and will also encourage walking and cycling across the site potentially reducing the number of shorter car journeys. The green spaces across the site linking with the countryside will support wildlife. The open spaces will also fit in with the green character of the town and soften the impact of the new buildings on the wider landscape.
- The industrial and office buildings will help meet the current employment needs of the town and provide a range of jobs.
- The allocation of 35% of housing to be affordable will provide decent affordable homes for local people, in a town that has an identified housing need.
- The traditional design characteristics that will be required (both residential and commercial) will ensure that the development is in character with the town, will limit the impact that the new buildings will have on the wider landscape, and will protect and possibly enhance the character of the Conservation Area and the listed buildings.

Negative Effect:

- Re-phasing the traffic lights at Kitt Hill could potentially result in long traffic queues, which will lead to an increase in vehicle exhaust emissions, impacting on local air quality.

What difference did the sustainability appraisal make?

- The appraisal identified that all the new development has the potential to have a large environmental impact in terms of energy and water consumption and through waste production. The appraisal therefore suggested that all new housing should meet the Government's Code for Sustainable Homes level 4 or above, that all new commercial property should meet BREEAM (Buildings Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) 'very good' standard or above, and that at least 20% of the energy use of the non-residential development should be generated through renewable sources on-site.
- The appraisal recommended that wildlife friendly features be installed in properties across the development and supported the option for a network of green space across the site, both of which will increase biodiversity.
- The appraisal supported the pedestrian and cycle options, and recommended that they be installed as early as possible to encourage walking and cycling.

Consultation

The draft development brief and sustainability appraisal report were subject to a six-week consultation period during August and September 2007. All the comments made during this period have now been considered and changes have been made to both documents where necessary. The main changes relating to the sustainability appraisal set out in the sustainability appraisal adoption statement available from www.dorsetforyou.com/bartonfarm.

Next Steps

The Barton Farm Development Brief has now been adopted by West Dorset District Council and forms part of the West Dorset Local Development Framework. Any future planning application for the site will now need to meet the requirements included in the brief and assess the significant environmental effects further in an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The significant effects identified by the sustainability appraisal will be monitored through the council's Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), this will help to identify at an early stage if further measures are required to counter any unforeseen bad effects.



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