



# Sustainability Appraisal Non-technical Summary

March 2016



## Joint Local Development Plan - Gwynedd & Môn



CYNGOR SIR  
YNYS MÔN  
ISLE OF ANGLESEY  
COUNTY COUNCIL



## Introduction

1. This document is the non-technical summary of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Anglesey and Gwynedd Joint Local Development Plan (JLDP). It explains how the appraisal has been undertaken and also how the process has assisted in the development of the Deposit Plan.

## Background

2. Anglesey County Council and Gwynedd Council are currently preparing a new JLDP. The requirement for each Local Planning Authority (LPA) to produce a Local Development Plan (LDP) is set out in Part 6 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004.
3. A LDP is a land use plan that is subject to independent examination, which will form the statutory development plan for a local authority area for the purposes of the Act. It includes a vision, strategy, area-wide policies for development types, land allocations, and where necessary policies and proposals for key areas of change and protection. Policies and allocations are shown geographically on the Proposals Map forming part of the plan.

## Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

4. Sustainability Appraisal for LDPs is mandatory under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004. SA is a systematic process that is designed to evaluate the predicted social, economic and environmental effects of the Plan.
5. In addition to the requirement to undertake a SA of the LDP, 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.

## Key Stages and Tasks in the SA Process

6. The key stages and tasks in the SA process are as follows:
  - **Stage A:** Setting the context and 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 and decision-making

- **Stage E:** Monitoring implementation of the plan or programme
7. The overarching purpose of the SA is to report on the SA process so far, and how it has informed the development of the Deposit Plan. The report has been informed and refined by the consultation at the Scoping Stage (A) and provides information on:
- the approach to the SA and details the methods used for each stage and each element of the developing JLDP;
  - the characteristics of the Local Plan area and key issues, setting out the baseline conditions and the policy context, together with an indication of how the area might develop without the JLDP
  - options in plan-making and alternatives assessment in SEA.
  - findings of the SA of the Preferred Strategy in 2013;
  - findings of the SA of the emerging Deposit Plan & Focused Changes;
  - the proposed measures concerning monitoring.

### Key Sustainability Issues

8. The current sustainability issues that will affect the Plan Area were identified through a review of plans and programmes and through the collection of baseline data. A summary of these issues is provided below:

TOPIC AREA	KEY ISSUES
<b>Biodiversity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Threats to the integrity and continuity of biodiversity features</li> <li>• The need to preserve Semi-Natural Woodlands</li> </ul>
<b>Communities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An ageing population</li> <li>• Out-migration of young people</li> <li>• A relatively healthy and safe population but variations apparent within the JLDP area</li> <li>• Social deprivation inequalities</li> </ul>
<b>Climatic Factors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintaining good air quality overall</li> <li>• Greenhouse gases and the threat of climate change</li> </ul>
<b>Cultural Heritage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recent decline in the proportion of Welsh speakers</li> <li>• A rich and diverse cultural heritage and historic environment</li> </ul>
<b>Economy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relatively low GVA particularly in Anglesey</li> <li>• Relatively high economic activity rate in the JLDP area but above average unemployment in Anglesey</li> </ul>

TOPIC AREA	KEY ISSUES
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decline in land based industries</li> <li>Lower than average earnings</li> <li>Education attainment</li> <li>Improving the tourism industry</li> </ul>
<b>Housing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing deprivation particularly in Gwynedd</li> <li>Affordability and lack of affordable housing</li> <li>Vacant homes and second homes</li> </ul>
<b>Landscape</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pressures upon important landscape designations</li> </ul>
<b>Soils, Minerals, Waste</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintaining soil carbon density in Gwynedd</li> <li>Limited amount of the best and most versatile quality of agricultural land</li> <li>Growth in Municipal Waste</li> <li>Reducing reliance on landfill sites</li> </ul>
<b>Transport</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited transport choices</li> <li>High reliance on the private car for transportation</li> </ul>
<b>Water</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintaining good river quality and improving standards where necessary</li> <li>Maintaining clean bathing waters and improving others</li> <li>Numerous populated areas at risk from flooding.</li> <li>Reduced availability of water resources.</li> </ul>

### Sustainability Objectives and Indicators

9. A key output of the SA Scoping Report was the development of an appraisal framework of proposed objectives, sub-objectives and indicators that will be used to identify, describe and evaluate the positive and negative environmental effects of the plan. In all there are 11 proposed SA objectives covering environmental, social and socio-economic aspects:

OBJECTIVE	SEA TOPICS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintain and enhance biodiversity interests and connectivity</li> </ul>	Biodiversity, Flora, Fauna, Soil
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote community viability, cohesion, health and well being</li> </ul>	Human Health, Population
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Manage and reduce the impacts of climate change by promoting and supporting mitigation and adaptation measures</li> </ul>	Climatic Factors, Air
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conserve, promote and enhance the Welsh</li> </ul>	Cultural Heritage

language	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conserve, promote and enhance cultural resources and historic heritage assets</li> </ul>	Cultural Heritage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Support economic growth and facilitate a vibrant, diversified economy providing local employment opportunities</li> </ul>	Population
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide good quality housing, including affordable housing that meets local needs</li> </ul>	Population, Human Health
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Value, conserve and enhance the plan area's rural landscapes and urban townscapes</li> </ul>	Landscape
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Use land and mineral assets efficiently and promote mechanisms for waste minimisation, re-use and recycling</li> </ul>	Material Assets, Soil
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Promote and enhance good transport links to support the community and the economy</li> </ul>	Population, Human Health
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Safeguard water quality, manage water resources sustainability and minimise flood risk</li> </ul>	Water, Biodiversity

## SA of Alternatives

### Strategic Options

10. The next stage of the SA process was to conduct an assessment of alternatives of the strategic options for the spatial strategy developed for the JLDP.
11. The overall aim of this stage of the appraisal was to develop the plan options and assess these against the sustainability objectives in order to inform the development of the Preferred Strategy in the most sustainable way.
12. Five strategic spatial options were put forward for the Anglesey and Gwynedd JLDP:
  - i) **Option D1** – Focus on Bangor and the Primary Key Settlements
  - ii) **Option D2** – Focus on Bangor, primary Key Settlements and the primary and Secondary Focus Areas and their catchment areas
  - iii) **Option D3** – Proportionate distribution to Urban and Rural areas
  - iv) **Option D3a** – Focus on rural areas
  - v) **Option D4** – Focus on large mixed use developments

13. Overall, the appraisal showed that Option D3 was the most sustainable option, scoring best against the majority of the sustainability objectives. The proportionate distribution of development throughout the Plan area addresses the socio-economic needs of the urban as well as the rural population, whilst simultaneously reducing the potential impact upon the environment of dispersed development.
14. Four growth options for the JLDP were also identified:
- i) **Option T1** – ‘Subregional apportionment’
  - ii) **Option T2** – ‘Population trend growth’
  - iii) **Option T3** – ‘House building trend growth’
  - iv) **Option T4** – ‘Economic base growth only’
15. On balance, Options T1 and T3 provided a more balanced sustainability approach than options T2 and T4, however, as found throughout the appraisal, many of the negative effects (identified for all options, but especially for Option T2) can be mitigated through strong policies in the LDP (e.g. on landscape and biodiversity) and the appropriate location of development.
16. Based on the results of the engagement process and the SA process, it was considered that it would be more sensible to plan for a figure which made some allowance for a higher growth level than the lower growth levels (Option T3 and T4), but that the T2 Option would be unrealistic and undeliverable.
17. As a result an alternative/hybrid level of growth was developed (Medium growth option). It was considered that this Medium growth option is more realistic and deliverable. It provides for and facilitates growth in the local economy, particularly in the energy sector, accompanied by a net growth in jobs and an associated increase in demand for housing and services.
18. In response to the comments received during the public consultation in May 2013, and a review of local circumstances, the housing target were revised. However it was considered that the revised housing growth for the area did not deviate from the hybrid growth option progressed in 2012. The reasons for the selection and rejection of options in the Preferred Strategy remain valid in light of the new evidence. As a result, further appraisal work was not required.

### **Site Allocations Options**

19. In order to ascertain what land is available to meet Anglesey and Gwynedd’s development needs, in October 2011 a Candidate Site Register (CSR) was formally opened where stakeholders, landowners and other interested parties were invited to submit land for consideration for inclusion in the JLDP. A total of 865 candidate sites were submitted with 364 in Gwynedd and 501 in Anglesey.
20. The initial filtering of candidate sites against the agreed methodology discarded those sites that failed the submission criteria i.e. they were identified as being totally unrealistic to develop, did not comply with international, national or local

policy or had fundamental constraints that could not be overcome or mitigated. As a result, 243 were removed from the assessment process.

21. All of the reasonable site options identified through the Councils' Candidate Site Process and Methodology were subject to SA. The findings are presented in the main SA Report along with the reasons for the progression or rejection of site options.

### **SA of Preferred Strategy (2013)**

22. An SA of the Vision and objectives was undertaken. Overall the vision was found to be compatible with the key objectives set out in the SA Framework and provides a robust strategic framework for delivering long term sustainability for the economy, communities and the environment of Anglesey and Gwynedd.
23. The SA of the objectives concluded that overall, the majority of the SA Objectives were either compatible with the JLDP Objectives or had no relationship with them. Only a smaller number of objectives were found to be potentially conflicting with each other. Minor amendments were made to both the vision and the objectives to improve their sustainability performance.
24. The next stage of the SA process was to conduct an assessment of the strategic policies of the JLDP. These policies are strategic in nature and were formulated according to the JLDP Vision and Objectives and are the proposed means of delivering the overall preferred strategy.
25. Minor amendments were made to some of the policies to improve their sustainability performance.

### **SA of Deposit Plan (2015)**

26. The SA of the Deposit Plan (including detailed policies) is structured according to 12 key topics which have been linked to relevant SA Objectives as well as SEA Directive topics. The appraisal of each topic has been divided into a number of sub-headings to ensure that each aspect of the emerging JLDP is considered, including policies and site allocations, as well as the interrelationships between topics and cumulative effects of the Plan as a whole.
27. In accordance with the SEA Directive and Regulations any likely significant effects, (including synergistic and cumulative effects) are identified along with any mitigation measures necessary to address them.
28. Overall, the SA found that the JLDP is likely to have short to long term positive cumulative effects against SA Objectives relating to housing, the economy, communities and transport. The provision of housing and employment along with associated improvements to infrastructure, including local facilities/facilities and

public transport, will ensure that the existing and future needs of communities are met.

29. The SA found that there is the potential for cumulative negative effects against SA Objectives relating to the environment, in particular those relating to the landscape, heritage, biodiversity, soils and air quality. The SA concluded that the JLDP contains sufficient mitigation to ensure that potential negative effects are not significant. Where necessary, the SA made recommendations to help strengthen policy mitigation contained within the Plan. This included specific recommendations for potential site allocations where appropriate.

### **SA of Focused Changes (2016)**

30. A number of Focused Changes were made following consultation on the Deposit JLDP in 2015. These changes were screened through the SA process to determine if they significantly affect the findings of the previous SA work undertaken for the Deposit JLDP. The screening found that the changes are minor and do not significantly affect the findings of the previous IA work as they seek to provide further clarification or avoid repetition. While no significant further appraisal work was deemed necessary, it was considered appropriate to update the findings of the SA for the Deposit JLDP to reflect the proposed amendments, including new policies, as well as consultation responses received.

### **Consultation**

31. The SA has been subject to public consultation at the scoping stage in 2011 and a Draft Initial SA Report was made available on the Council's websites in July 2012. In addition, further consultation has taken place on the Initial SA Report (May 2013) that accompanied the Preferred Strategy Document in 2013 as well as the SA Report (February 2015) that accompanied the Deposit JLDP on consultation in 2015. Thus consultation has been a vital ongoing and iterative element of the plan-making and the SA processes. The comments received as well as responses to them are presented as part of the main SA Report.

### **Monitoring Proposals**

32. Monitoring proposals have been suggested throughout the SA process and will be progressed alongside the JLDP. At this stage of the plan process, it is too early to develop a final monitoring framework as the effects of plan implementation are unclear. The final monitoring framework will be developed to ensure that it reflects the scope of the adopted Plan and its policies.

### **Next Steps**

33. The SA Report and this NTS will be submitted alongside the JLDP and supporting evidence to the Welsh Government. The JLDP along with supporting documents, including the SA and HRA, will be considered through the independent Examination. Any proposed changes to the Plan or new evidence

arising during the Examination will be considered through the SA as part of the iterative and ongoing process.

34. Once the JLDP is adopted, a SEA Statement will be published which will describe how the SEA has informed development of the Plan, including how opinions expressed on the Environmental Report have been taken into account, the reasons for choosing the Plan as adopted, in light of other reasonable alternatives, and the measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the LDP.