Sustainability Appraisal of Draft Strategic Development Principles
February 2010

1.0   Introduction

1.1   This sustainability appraisal has been prepared to assist the development of the Development Framework Strategy for the University of East Anglia. The process of sustainability appraisal is an ongoing and iterative process, which identifies potential adverse impact on sustainability issues, appropriate mitigation measures and further information that is needed to fully assess sustainability issues.

1.2   The rationale and methodology of how the sustainability appraisal would be carried out was identified in the Scoping Report. This identified that although a sustainability appraisal would not be a statutory requirement for this document, it will be used to inform the allocation of any sites at UEA under the Site allocations plan currently being prepared by the city council.

1.3   The sustainability appraisal process has been established through the Norwich Local Development Framework. Work on the Joint Core Strategy through the Greater Norwich Development Partnership and the Site Allocations Plan has identified sustainability objectives and the framework to appraise different development options. Using the same framework and baseline information will enable a consistent approach to be used to appraise options, which has been widely consulted on and will help to integrate the Development Framework Strategy into the Local Development Framework for Norwich.

1.4   This sustainability appraisal has been undertaken by Norwich City Council officers on three initial options presented in the draft strategic development principles document. The three options considered were:
        1) On-campus growth
        2) Off-campus growth
        3) No growth

1.5   The sustainability appraisal can only be carried out on the information presented and as such this appraisal is only an initial assessment that will be built on as more information comes forward. There is an opportunity to comment on how this appraisal has been undertaken and any other comments there may be on the process at this stage.

2.0 Summary of impacts of different growth options identified through the sustainability appraisal

2.1   Summary of environmental impacts

2.1.1   There could potentially be a greater adverse impact on the surrounding designations at the existing UEA campus for on-campus growth in comparison to off-campus growth or no-growth. The impact of any growth would be dependent on its location and if there were any adjacent designations. There could however be a reduced effect on the environment for the on-campus growth in comparison to the off-campus growth through the reduced need to travel between university locations, potentially by private car.

2.2   Summary of social impacts

2.2.1   The communities surrounding the university campus could be adversely impacted by any increase in traffic around the campus, but the concentration of traffic to one campus could enable better traffic management through implementing travel plans and could increase the demand for public transport to the campus. There could be the opportunity for more knowledge economy-related jobs. Further to this the additional staff and student numbers could result in other job generation in services supporting the growth of the campus and of the additional staff/students to the area.

2.2.2   More students for both the on and off-campus growth options could lead to an impact on local communities, with an increasing proportion of residents being students. On campus growth could increase the concentration of students around the existing university area, whereas off-campus growth could potentially disperse the student population around the city area. The total proportion of students within the communities surrounding the university would need to be further considered to consider any adverse impacts of 'studentification'. This would be dependent on the final locations for off-campus growth and any kind of additional provision specifically made for students.

2.2.3   The concentration of growth on-campus would contribute towards the existing social hubs for students on campus and foster a sense of student identity. Off-campus growth could in effect break up the student community.

2.3   Summary of economic impact

2.3.1 The economy could generally benefit from the growth of the existing campus, but it could more so be specifically to the knowledge economy. Any growth would contribute to the current economic importance of the Norwich Research Park, enabling the growth of the economy in Norwich and the greater Norwich area. There could be associated jobs with services that could support the university and the additional people attracted to Norwich through jobs or courses at UEA.

2.4   The impacts of different growth options will be considered through the Development Framework Strategy and measures will be identified to mitigate against these impacts.

3.0   Summary of issues for each development option

3.1   Summary of on-campus option

3.1.1   The development of the existing campus could reduce the need to travel off-campus, potentially by private car, between different campus buildings and it is currently served by a good bus route to the city centre. On-campus development could also re-use existing brownfield land. Many of the environmental and social impacts would be reliant on the type of development, how it was planned and the final layout and design.

3.1.2   Recommendations have been made to address the concerns raised in the sustainability appraisal. These were:

Environment
- Details on how water quality would be maintained on UEA broad
- How adverse impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity of UEA campus and surrounding area will be avoided

- Measures to ensure design of any development maintains and enhances landscapes, townscapes and the historic environment, including the listed buildings on campus
- Ensure the design of any development reduces energy consumption requirement, uses renewable energy and contributes to reducing the impact of climate change on people, land and property
- Ensure any development is located in lower risk floor zones and appropriate mitigation measures taken
- Measures to ensure any development uses water efficiently
- Development should use resources including land and energy efficiently and minimise waste production

Social

- Development should address issues of deprivation in nearby wards
- Identification of how additional population resulting from university expansion will access healthcare and how healthy lifestyles will be encouraged, including promoting the use of the open spaces at the university campus
- Identification of how lifelong learning and training can be increased, and measures to increase education opportunities in wards with higher levels of deprivation. Measures to avoid graduates occupying jobs they are over-qualified to do.
- Identification of how additional population/people will impact on local housing availability and need
- Identify opportunities through the development framework to build on existing community identifies to reduce social issues such as crime and anti-social behaviour
- Consider how development of the campus could address wider areas of unemployment and improve earnings
- Consider the impacts of additional students and staff on the local area relating to quality of existing communities and identify any necessary mitigation measures. Promote the use of open space on campus.
- Any on-campus development should consider how accessibility to the campus and local services could be further improved

Economic

- Ensure continued support for indigenous and small business growth
- Identify how an expansion of the existing campus would not have an adverse impact on local communities, particularly through traffic increases.

3.2   Summary of off-campus option

3.2.1   The creation of other 'hubs' away from the main campus could increase the need to travel between university buildings, although it could potentially re-use derelict and previously developed land nearer the city centre. The feasibility of any such sites would need to be considered however, for example in relation to ownership and purchasing of such sites. If potential sites were located outside of the city centre they would be less accessible by public transport links and therefore could increase the use of private car travel. The location of any off-campus growth would need careful consideration in relation to location of transport links and main areas of residences of students and staff.

3.2.2   Off-campus growth could reduce the pressure of development on the open spaces at UEA and it may be possible to ensure that future growth was located near transport hubs, existing centres and facilities.

3.2.3   In the absence of specific site information it is difficult to state these facts with certainty however, as the final location would impact on most of these considerations.

3.2.4   Recommendations have been made to address the concerns raised in the sustainability appraisal. These were:

Environment
- The precise locations of growth in relation to public transport are required to assess the impact of traffic on the environment
- Details of how water quality issues would be addressed in relation to any off-campus growth
- Measures to ensure design of any development maintains and enhances landscapes, townscapes and the historic environment
- Ensure the design of any development reduces energy consumption requirement, uses renewable energy and contributes to reducing the impact of climate change on people, land and property
- Ensure any development is located in lower risk floor zones and appropriate mitigation measures taken
- Measures to ensure any development uses water efficiently
- Development should use resources including land and energy efficiently and minimise waste production

Social
- Development should address issues of deprivation in nearby wards
- Identification of how additional population resulting from university expansion will access healthcare and how healthy lifestyles will be encouraged
- Identification of how lifelong learning and training can be increased, and measures to increase education opportunities in wards with higher levels of deprivation. Measures to avoid graduates occupying jobs they are over-qualified to do.
- Identification of how additional population/people will impact on local housing availability and need
- Identify opportunities through the development framework to build on existing community identifies to reduce social issues such as crime and anti-social behaviour
- Consider how development of the university could address wider areas of unemployment and improve earnings
- Consider the impacts of additional students and staff on the local area relating to quality of existing communities and identify any necessary mitigation measures.
- Any on-campus development should consider how accessibility to the campus and local services could be further improved

Economic
- Ensure continued support for indigenous and small business growth

3.3   Summary of no-growth option

3.3.1   The no-growth option could to some degree have a reduced impact on environment designations as it could reduce development pressures, enabling habitats to be protected and conserved. The absence of growth however could prevent further opportunities from coming forward to enhance and improve landscapes and townscapes, or to provide education or skill learning facilities for example. The no-growth option in general across Norwich could prevent sustainable economic growth and have an adverse effect on the wider Norwich economy, reducing the competitiveness of the city in relation to the general economy of the UK.

4.0   Conclusion

4.1   The sustainability appraisal of the initial options has demonstrated that there are different issues with on-campus and off-campus growth, as well as no growth at all. The final details of how development goes ahead for the on-campus option and the precise location of any off-campus option will greatly affect the outcome of the final sustainability appraisal.

4.2   Many of the sustainability criteria do relate to the final details of the location, layout and design of any development. In broader principles however the key issues that differentiate on and off-campus growth are how new development would be accessed, and the resulting impact on air quality and residential amenity of nearby households, and the impact of development on the environmentally sensitive areas surrounding the UEA campus. The other concerns raised in the initial options sustainability appraisal could be addressed through appropriate consideration to design principles and the strategies of the university to ensure its growth does not negatively impact on local communities.

4.3   Although the off-campus growth option could provide an opportunity to use existing sustainable transport links there could be an overall increase in the need to travel between university buildings. This would be highly dependent on the precise location of any off-campus growth. On balance the on-campus growth option therefore could be beneficial to sustainability considerations, provided that appropriate mitigation measures are taken through the final layout and design of any development to consider the wider benefits provided to the communities around UEA and the environmentally important land around the UEA campus.

4.4   The sustainability appraisal process is however an ongoing iterative process. This initial appraisal has identified areas where more information is required to fully assess options against the sustainability objectives. The Strategic Development Principles consultation document (23 February 2010) identifies measures to address some of the above recommendations. These measures will need to be taken forward to identify how different environmental, social and economic issues raised in the sustainability appraisal are addressed through the Development Framework Strategy.

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