

**Durham City Neighbourhood Planning Forum Working Group: SA Workshop  
8 March 2018, Antioch House**

**1. Attendance**

**Present:** John Ashby, Sue Childs, Roger Cornwell (Chair), John Lowe, Matthew Phillips, Ros Ward.

**Durham County Council:** Carole Dillon, Claire Hattam

**Durham University:** Matthew Wright

**2. Sustainability Appraisal Workshop with DCC Officers**

The workshop was arranged by Carole to help the working group to improve the draft sustainability appraisal. DCC's written comments on this are contained in Appendix B attached to their letter of 18 December 2017. The workshop used policy D1 as an example and Carole distributed a matrix showing worked examples. The following are the main points made during the workshop:

1. There are many technical aspects to SA and the Forum has applied to Locality for support. This is likely to be forthcoming but not for 12 weeks.
2. We need to distinguish and assess more carefully the different types of effects of policies. The effect can be positive or negative, or not applicable or uncertain, but this last concept would need some unpicking. The impact then needs more clarification by the use of 'characteristics' of the impact. For example, these can be direct/indirect, short/medium/long term, certain/probable/unlikely, permanent/temporary, cumulative, minimal/medium/severe effect. Different weight needs to be given to them according to their type. We need to apply these considerations to each probing question.
3. There are no hard and fast rules on assessing the overall impact of these different effects. For example, do two negatives outweigh one positive? This is about how we move from probing questions to an overall impact assessment. The use of the characteristics of the impact should be very helpful in assessing this overall impact.
4. We need to give a fuller justification for the overall impact scores and the process to assess effects needs to be collaborative. We need to present more detailed evidence for choices.
5. We need to make explicit how we move from the probing questions to the overall impact assessment of each SA objective, then the overall impact across all these objectives: we need to document the iterative process; the narrative is more important than the score. "Uncertain" might be a realistic impact category.
6. Probing questions and objectives need to be about specific policies, not about the plan's policies as a whole. It is, however, important to check whether the policies work together and look at the overall impact of the plan on its own stated objectives, not the SA objectives.
7. If we propose to make significant policy changes as a result of this process, we should carry out a targeted consultation with those most likely to be affected.

8. We must specify mitigation measures for any negative impacts that we identify. We need to note residual impacts even after mitigation.
9. We have to give more detail to explain the **reasonable** options that we consider and give clear reasons for our final choice. “Do nothing” can sometimes be a reasonable option. We do not have to invent options or consider unreasonable proposals.
10. It will be clearer if we provide separate tables for the options we have rejected. The chosen policy will be our “preferred option”.
11. We must carry out an assessment of the additional housing sites that have been suggested during the public consultation. Carole will share any information about them that is in the SHLAA.
12. We need to take more account of the effects on biodiversity in our assessment of sites.
13. We need to tailor national and existing Durham City saved policies to local circumstances. “Gap analysis” will identify whether a local issue is already adequately covered by existing policies. We need to emphasise the local distinctiveness of our policies: the fine grain.

The working group found the workshop extremely helpful and thanked Carole and Claire for their contributions.