

An assessment must be completed for all key decisions included in the Forward Plan.

Stage 1 This stage determines whether a full assessment is required

1.1 Description of the proposed decision

To adopt the Rossendale Local Plan 2019 to 2036 in accordance with the Town and Country (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. This Assessment builds on the previous assessment undertaken for the earlier version of the Local Plan that was published for formal consultation in August 2018 and submitted for independent examination. During the examination a number of modifications have been recommended by the Inspectors in order for the Local Plan to be adopted. Of these, the following matters have been screened as requiring appraisal through the SA process:

- the Local Plan Vision and Objectives;
- Policy SD4;
- Policy SS;
- 32 site-specific housing policies; and
- seven site-specific employment policies.

The appraisal has identified that these modified or new policies are unlikely to result in any significant effects.

1.2 Will the proposed decision have the effect of flora and fauna of either increasing or reducing the range of species and habitats within the borough

Yes No

If no, proceed no further if yes continue to stage 2

Stage 2 This stage helps understand whether any impact on biodiversity is positive or negative

2.1 Will the proposed decision have a positive or negative impact on biodiversity? (A positive impact would increase the range of species or habitats or increase the protection of existing habitats, a negative impact would do the opposite.)

Positive negative

2.2 Describe the impact, in particular drawing attention to scale. For example removing the only habitat in the North West for a particular plant is clearly of great significance, whereas a negative impact on a very common plant is of less significance.

A Sustainability Appraisal (SA) has been undertaken by an external consultancy (Lepus Consulting) at every stage in order to understand the impact of the Local Plan on environmental, social and economic objectives. The assessment includes an appraisal of the policies as well as the site allocations' impact on biodiversity, flora and fauna. In addition a Habitat Regulations Assessment has also been undertaken at each stage. This is due to the proximity of Rossendale to the South Pennines Moors Phase 2 Special Protection Area (SPA), South Pennine Moors Special Area of Consultation (SAC), and the Manchester Mosses and Rochdale Canal SACs. Both a Sustainability Appraisal and a Habitat Regulations Assessment was undertaken of the Proposed Main Modifications and they were published for consultation alongside the Main Modifications in August this year. Statutory consultees including Natural England as well as neighbouring authorities and Lancashire County Council were contacted. The Inspectors' Report states that they are "satisfied the Plan will not have adverse effects on the integrity of any European site. Natural England are also satisfied with this position" (para 27)

The Sustainability Appraisal accompanying the Main Modifications consultation has identified that the new or modified policies are unlikely to result in significant effects and are generally expected to improve the Plan's sustainability performance. In particular the SA focuses on the inclusion of the Spatial Portrait, modifications to the Spatial Strategy, the new Policy on Green Belt compensation (SD4), and the new and amended site specific policies.

In total 58 Main Modifications to the Local Plan were proposed. Of these, the following matters were screened as requiring appraisal through the Sustainability Assessment process: The Local Plan Vision and Objectives; Policy SD4: Green Belt Compensatory Measures; Policy SS: Spatial Strategy; 32 site-specific housing policies; and • seven site-specific employment policies. Overall, the Main Modifications of the Rossendale Local Plan would be expected to improve the sustainability performance of the Local Plan. The new and amended policies assessed within the SA of Main Modifications report would be likely to result in positive impacts, or no significant change, with regard to sustainability. The modifications would not be expected to alter the residual effects identified in the Regulation 19 SA report

The Rossendale Local Plan was subject to a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) in accordance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 as amended¹⁹ (the Habitats Regulations). 2.5.2. Following a screening exercise (Stage 1 of the HRA process) an Appropriate Assessment²⁰ (Stage 2 of the HRA process) was undertaken to assess Likely Significant Effects (LSEs) in more detail.

LSEs associated with recreation could not objectively be ruled out at the following European Sites: South Pennine Moors SAC; and South Pennine Moors Phase 2 SPA. 2.5.3. The HRA concluded that, based on the council's continued adoption and progress of the relevant monitoring and mitigation strategies, all potential LSEs on European sites caused by the RLP alone or in-combination could be objectively ruled out. 2.5.4 In 2021, the Main Modifications were assessed in the HRA process 21. This assessment concluded that there would be no adverse impact on the site integrity of any European site as a result of the Main Modifications.

These documents are available to view in the Examination Library - www.rossendale.gov.uk/localplan. In addition Appendix 4 which also accompanies this Report to Council includes the Post-Adoption Statement for the Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Rossendale Local Plan.

If the impact is positive you need go no further

Stage 3 This stage allows any negative impact to be balanced against the other positive benefits of the proposed decision using the framework created by the wellbeing power set out in the Local Government Act 2000

3.1 Indicate the benefits which will be delivered by this decision under the following headings. As far as possible quantify benefits (eg by jobs created)

Economic

The Local Plan seeks to provide sufficient employment land to meet the Borough's requirement of 27 hectares for business, general industrial or storage and distribution.

Environmental

The Local Plan contains policies to avoid harm and where possible enhance biodiversity. The Policies Map also shows national and local biodiversity and geodiversity sites to be protected, and identifies a network of Green Infrastructure for protection, management and enhancement.

Social

The Local Plan now aims to provide at least 3,191 dwellings over the plan period to 2036 (compared to 3,180 additional dwellings over the plan period up to 2034) to meet the local housing need - a small increase.

- 3.2 Are there steps which are planned or could be taken to mitigate the impact on biodiversity (eg relocating certain species during building work)

The Local Plan contains several policies designated to protect and enhance the Borough's biodiversity which "will provide effective and significant levels of protection for biodiversity assets", as well as ensuring at least no net loss of biodiversity and gains where possible and consistent with national policy (Policy ENV1)

The HRA proposes mitigation measures including the provision of a Visitor Management Plan for the South Pennine Moors in partnership with neighbouring authorities (ENV 4).

Stage 4 This stage sets out the balance between the negative impacts on biodiversity and the other positive impacts so that Councillors can make an informed decision.

Positive impacts (eg X jobs created)	Negative Impacts (eg acres of habitat lost)
27 ha of employment land; 3,191 additional new dwellings; Green Infrastructure network designation Commitment to no net loss of biodiversity	The majority of housing sites and employment sites are located on greenfield land

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