THE BLACK COUNTRY LOCAL FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

The Black Country Local Authorities
**QUALITY MANAGEMENT**

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NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

1. WHAT IS A STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a systemic process for evaluating the environmental consequences of plans and programmes to ensure that environmental issues are integrated and assessed at the earliest opportunity in the decision-making process. Article 1 of the SEA Directive states that the aim is to:

‘provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development’.

Planning Practice Guidance¹ on Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal published by the Department for Communities and Local Government promotes a combined process (i.e. a process which assesses social, economic and environmental effects) and this is the approach that has been adopted here.

2. PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The Black Country Local Authorities are in the process of developing the Black Country Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS).

The LFRMS will provide detailed policy guidance on a range of planning matters including communication, flood risk management and adaptation to flood risk.

This non-technical summary sets out the results of a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the LFRMS using a set of SEA objectives (see Section 3). It sets out information on how the draft SEA has informed the preparation of the LFRMS. It also presents the key findings of the draft SEA and gives a short summary of the process. The purpose of the SEA was to assess the broader sustainability effects of the LFRMS. How sustainability and sustainable development was defined and understood for the purposes of this assessment is set out below.

The overall aim of the SEA was to minimise any negative impacts associated with the LFRMS whilst putting forward ways of enhancing the benefits that could be achieved.

3. THE SEA FRAMEWORK

The SEA Framework was developed at the scoping stage. It underpins the assessment methodology and comprises a series of 7 objectives (SEA Objectives) against which the alternative options for the LFRMS, and the preferred LFRMS Objectives, Measures and Actions have been assessed. The SEA Objectives are intended to be overarching and focussed on the key aspects of the LFRMS.

The SEA Objectives have been developed using the review of other relevant plans, programmes and environmental objectives, the baseline data and the key issue and opportunities identified. Each of the SEA Objectives is supported by a series of sub-objectives to add further clarity and to assist the assessment process. These sub-objectives have been considered by the assessors when undertaking the appraisal in order to inform their decision.

The SEA Objectives and associated sub-objectives are presented in Table 1 below.

### Table 1 SEA Objectives and Sub-Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEA Objective</th>
<th>SEA Sub-Objective</th>
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| 1 To protect and enhance human health, safety and wellbeing | To reduce flood risk to people and property  
To ensure recreation opportunities are maintained and enhanced  
To ensure surface water quality is maintained within statutory standards |
| 2 To protect and enhance biodiversity, key habitats and species | To protect and enhance designated sites of nature conservation importance  
To protect and enhance wildlife particularly protected and notable species  
To protect and enhance habitats and wildlife corridors  
To provide opportunities for people to come into contact with flourishing wildlife places and open green spaces, whilst encouraging respect for and raising awareness of the sensitivity of these sites  
To ensure that new infrastructure incorporates ecological enhancements |
| 3 To protect and enhance the historic environment and heritage assets | To protect and enhance heritage assets and their settings, and also historic landscape / townscape value |
| 4 To protect and enhance landscape character and townscape character and quality | To protect and enhance the distinctive character and quality of the landscape / townscape  
To promote sensitive design in new infrastructure |
| 5 To maintain and improve the quality and quantity of the Borough's surface water environment and groundwater resource | To improve the quality of groundwater and surface water  
To encourage sustainable use of water resources  
To protect foul drainage, sewage treatment facilities and surface water drainage |
| 6 To limit and adapt to climate change | To contribute positively to adaptation to climate change  
To reduce or manage flooding  
To ensure new infrastructure is able to withstand extreme weather events  
To encourage the inclusion of flood mitigation measures such as |
**SEA Objective** | **SEA Sub-Objective**
---|---
| SuDS | To encourage infrastructure that is energy efficient in design and construction |
| 7 | To ensure the sustainable use of natural resources |

To ensure development of brownfield land and outside of sensitive sites where possible
To promote the prudent use of land resources
To protect and enhance soil resources
To ensure that contaminated land will be guarded against
To protect and enhance geodiversity

### 4. SUMMARY OF KEY SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE BLACK COUNTRY

<table>
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<th>SEA Topic</th>
<th>Key Sustainability Issues</th>
<th>Key Sustainability Opportunities</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna</strong></td>
<td>There are a number of designated sites for ecology and nature conservation in the Black Country, including Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Areas of Conservation and National Nature Reserves, together with numerous Local Nature Reserves and locally designated non-statutory sites. Any increase in flood risk may pose a threat to the integrity of habitats and the distribution of species and habitats.</td>
<td>Management of the water environment should ensure benefits upon biodiversity, notably the area’s protected species and habitats. The LFRMS has a role in ensuring measures that have regard to potential impacts on biodiversity flora and fauna. The management of flooding should be designed for the benefit of wildlife. There is an opportunity to improve water quality through control of surface water runoff and point discharges Use of Sustainable Drainage Systems in new development and on integrated green corridors would benefit biodiversity.</td>
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<td><strong>Population and Human Health</strong></td>
<td>In 2001, Wolverhampton had a population of 249,470 which grew by 5.17% in 2011. Walsall grew by 5.88% to a population of 269,323 in 2011. Sandwell had a population of 308,063 in 2001 and grew by 8.17%. Dudley had a population of 312,925 and grew by 2% by 2011. Population growth is likely to place increasing pressure on water resources in terms of water supply. Inappropriate development within flood plains must be avoided. Flooding can have a great impact on people’s</td>
<td>The LFRMS will have a role in reducing flood risk. It should help to ensure that the Black Country is able to accommodate planned new development without increasing local flood risk. There may be opportunities to improve the quality of river corridors as green links, enhancing local environmental quality and helping to improve quality of life, especially in the most deprived neighbourhoods. Sustainable Drainage Systems should be incorporated into all new developments.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEA Topic</td>
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<td>Key Sustainability Opportunities</td>
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<td>Psychosocial needs and mental health.</td>
<td>wherever feasible to reduce flood risk.</td>
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<td>Soil and Land Quality</td>
<td>Flooding can lead to soil erosion, and in relevant locations soil erosion can contribute to higher phosphate levels in waterbodies. Any adverse impacts on its stability or fertility as a result of the LFRMS must be avoided.</td>
<td>The LFRMS will have a role in helping to avoid damage to soils, for example as a result of rapid surface run-off causing soil erosion.</td>
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<td>Water</td>
<td>Parts of the Black Country are susceptible to flood risk. Such areas are likely to increase over time as a consequence of climate change. There are a range of water features within the Black Country. It should be ensured that inappropriate development (any development constructed against Environment Agency advice on flooding or which, by virtue of its location or operation, would increase the risk of flooding to people or property) is prevented. Water resources are likely to be susceptible to increased pressure in the future. Water quality can be improved across the area.</td>
<td>Where possible, Sustainable Drainage Systems should be used to manage and reduce surface run-off rates and further reduce flood risk. The LFRMS should promote the amenity value of surface watercourses for developing local environmental quality and creating a sense of place. It should also promote working with natural processes and the avoidance of opening up culverts. Control of surface water run off can reduce flood risk as well as improve water quality.</td>
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<td>Climatic Factors</td>
<td>Many areas lie within floodplain associated with the main rivers, e.g. the River Stour and River Tame. Climate change is anticipated to increase the risk of flooding, especially during the winter. More frequent and more severe summer droughts will place a greater strain on water resources.</td>
<td>The LFRMS should seek to reduce the risk of flooding to help to ensure that development is directed outside of identified floodplains and flood paths. It will need to take account of projected long – term changes in weather patterns and the potential for more frequent and severe flooding. The LFRMS should promote more efficient and sustainable use of water.</td>
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<td>Cultural Heritage</td>
<td>The Black Country has a range of heritage assets, some of which may be at risk of flooding. Development puts increasing pressure on cultural heritage assets, and it is therefore important that any new infrastructure development considers heritage issues and ensures the protection of assets and the wider historic landscape / townscape. New development / infrastructure has the potential to damage unknown buried archaeological remains.</td>
<td>Heritage assets and their settings should be protected and enhanced. Opportunities should be sought to reduce flood risk to specific heritage assets. Consideration should be given to the impacts of flood alleviation measures on the historic environment and heritage assets should be protected and conserved. Emphasis on preservation in situ should be ensured. Archaeological preservation in situ should be undertaken if it is beneficial to the archaeology rather than as a matter of convenience.</td>
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Management of surface water can have a significant impact upon landscape and townscape, particularly in relation to flood defences. Careful consideration must be given to the protection of the existing quality and character.

It is essential that landscape and townscape character and quality is protected and enhanced where possible.

5. OUTCOMES OF THE SEA

The assessment of the LFRMS has not identified any instances where potential significant negative effects are anticipated. The main positive effects identified were associated with flood risk and the potential effects upon human health and climate change adaptation, water quality and the protection of biodiversity, heritage assets, landscape and townscape.

The recommendations to ensure the sustainability of the LFRMS, identified through the SEA process, comprise:

- The role of climate change adaptation could be given greater emphasis in the LFRMS;
- The LFRMS could emphasise the need to consider environmental enhancements as a part of the management of flood risk infrastructure;
- Need to highlight that other organisations should also consider the potential to contribute to wider sustainability objectives in fulfilling their responsibilities;
- It should be ensured that new development does not adversely affect the current WFD status of local watercourses; and
- More emphasis could be placed upon the need to protect and where possible enhance biodiversity, heritage assets and landscape / townscape character and quality.

6. THE NEXT STEPS

This SEA Report will be submitted to the Statutory Consultees, and be made available on the Council’s website to view and download. This will enable relevant stakeholders to ensure that the SEA Report is satisfactory. For further information view the Black Country’s Local Authorities planning policy webpages: www.wolverhampton.gov.uk / http://cms.walsall.gov.uk/index/environment.htm / www.sandwell.gov.uk
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