

Sustainability Appraisal in the UK: a brief overview

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Structure of Presentation

- 1 SEA and SA in the EU and the UK
- 2 Issues of Integration
- 3 The UK SA process
- 4 An example in practice –West Midlands sub-regional plan review
- 5 Some remaining issues of concern

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1. SEA and SA in the EU and the UK

- EU Directive 2001/42/EC requires a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) (with strong bio-physical focus) for plans and programmes (not policies), that are prepared by an authority, required by legislation/regulation, for:

agriculture forestry fisheries water man
industry transport waste man **town and country planning**
telecoms tourism energy

- For Town and Country Planning, the UK has sought to integrate SEA within a wider **Sustainability Appraisal (SA)** framework. This represents a major shift from the bio-physical focus of SEA towards a more integrated (environmental/social/economic /governance) focus for assessment. This applies to all local and regional plans, and more recently to the new generation of National Policy Statements (NPSs)

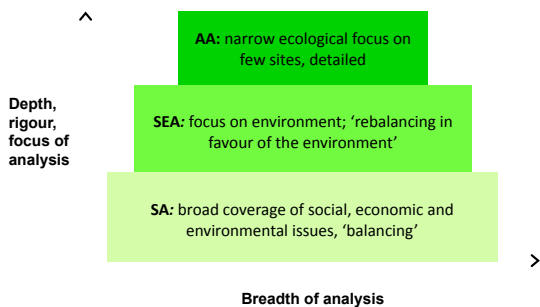
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2. Issues of integration

- How to fit the 'deep and narrow' SEA process into the 'wider, but shallower' SA process?. There is also Appropriate Assessment(AA)—Habitats Directive (Guidance is evolving – eg. 'SA of RSSs and LDDs'-- ODPM, 2005)
- How far should the SA/SEA be integrated into the planning process – stapled, concurrent or holistic?
- How can we better integrate key stakeholder participation into a strategic level of assessment?

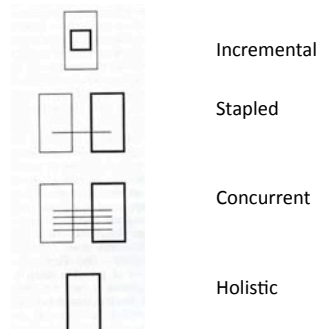
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Deep SEA, shallow SEA, all at SEA?



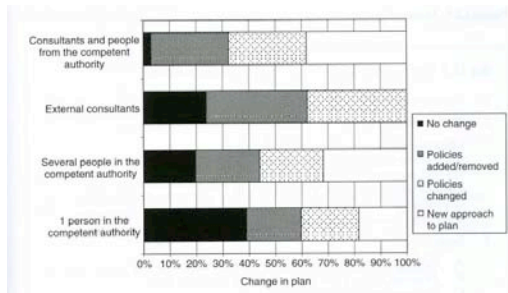
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SEA/SA and planning – possible models of integration



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Who carries out appraisal vs. changes to plan?



Source: Therivel and Minas, 2003

3. The UK Sustainability Appraisal Process—Key Steps

- A: Set plan context (other plans etc) and objectives**
Establish SA objectives, and relevant criteria, for the plan
Collect baseline information
Consult on scope of SA
- B: Test plan objectives against SA objectives**
Develop plan options
Predict and assess effects of plan options, against SA objectives/criteria
- C: Develop preferred option**
Assess effects against SA objectives/criteria
Mitigate adverse effects
- D: Prepare separate Draft Plan and SA Report**

4. Black Country Sub-Regional Study (2005-07) example—an open and participative SA process

- Consultants:** Entec UK Ltd carried out the SA on behalf of the Black Country Consortium;
- The SA Steering Group:** guided the process under an independent chair (JG);
- The SA Reference Group:** included a cross section of representatives from social, economic and environmental interests in the Black Country.

Consultation methods included workshops, emails, web publicity and mail outs.



Objectives based approach to assessment—some examples

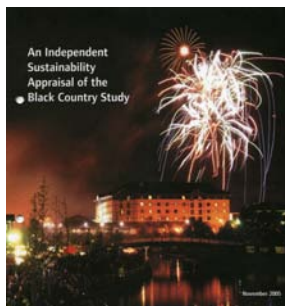
Policy UR1A: Implementing Urban Renaissance – Black Country Regeneration Priorities								
Key baseline info and target (where available)	Geographic Scale				Timescale			Cumulative, Synergistic Secondary and Temporary effects
	Overall effect	Local	Sub-region	Region	Short Term (0-5 yrs)	Medium term (6-20 yrs)	Long term (20+ yrs)	
Objective 2. Reduce crime levels, the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour to help people have pride in their communities. Will it reduce actual crime levels? Total crime rates per 1,000 households have fallen in the Black Country since 2001/2. The largest fall has been in Walsall. Recorded incidents per 1,000 households in 2003/04: Walsall 262, Dudley 191, Sandwell and Wolverhampton 330	+	+	+	N	+	+	+	The effects on this objective are closely interlinked with the effects on other objectives such as housing, poverty and education. There is considerable potential for cumulative effects resulting from improvements in the environment, improved job opportunities and housing quality.

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Objective 10. To reduce congestion and pollution by increasing transport choice and by reducing the need to travel by terry-car. Will it increase the proportion of journeys made by means other than the private car? Will it increase the amount of freight transported by rail? In 2002, 78% of people travelled to work by car with the bus attracting 9%, Only 5% used the train to get to work and 3% cycle and walk. Congestion/journey times: mean travel time to work in 2002 was 27 minutes. The national targets for rail freight are an 80% increase in the volume carried by rail, increasing rails share of the market by 10% by 2010.	+	+	+	+	N	+	+	There are secondary effects arising from this policy. Greater access to public transport may have positive benefits on deprivation particularly as the strategy focuses on the centres and corridors which also coincide with the main areas of deprivation.

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Objective 14. To enhance the Black Country environment by making it cleaner, more attractive and safer for present and future generations. Will it improve –accessibility to quality green spaces? – connectivity of green spaces, development of ‘green corridors’ and links to the countryside? – resident satisfaction with their environment? Will it increase the proportion of development on previously developed land? 33% of Birmingham and the Black Country is green space, and over 7% of this is designated under law or by the local authority. 98% of residential development occurs on previously developed land. Regional target of new housing on previously developed land through conversion of existing buildings to 60% by 2011. There is no data available on resident satisfaction with their environment.	++	++	++	+	+	++	++	There may be cumulative positive effects for this objective in relation to health and well being, biodiversity and landscape, historic environment, housing, culture and recreation. There are also secondary effects on the economy as improvements in environmental quality resulting from the policy are likely to increase the attractiveness of the area for investment. The temporary effects of major redevelopment and related construction activity may be negative on environmental quality until such time as developments are complete.

Did the SA/SEA process have an impact in the plan making process?

- Adoption of a vital 4th environmental objective to be added to the initial 3 primarily socio-economic objectives.
- Highlighted advantages of hybrid spatial strategy combining centres and corridors.
- Influenced the inclusion of health as a spatial issue.
- Supported step change in public transport provision via Metro extension.



Had an important role in the January 2007 EIP; unfortunately the Black Country Urban Park did not win the £50m Big Lottery funding (Dec 2007)!!

5. Some wider remaining issues of concern

- Drawing on some research recently (2008) conducted by colleagues at OBU on the nature and effectiveness of SA for local plan core strategies (part of Local Development Frameworks required for each of c400 English LAs)
- Based on review of SA elements of 45 core strategies, plus interviews with key officers concerned, all supplemented by a survey of all LAs on various aspects of the SEA/SA process
- Focus on core strategy impacts on 17 social, environmental and economic topics covered by most of the SA objectives
- Some key issues investigated included:
 - relative plan impacts on SEE sustainability issues
 - extent to which SAs are protecting the environment
 - specification of SEE trade-offs

Plan impacts on SEE sustainability issues (using a scale of +2 to -2 to assess plan impacts on various topics, for 45 SAs)

Social	Accessibility	1.27
	Crime	0.59
	Equity/inclusion	1.16
	Health	1.04
	Housing	1.23
	Av: broadly social	1.06
Environmental	Air	-0.21
	Biodiversity	0.26
	Climate change and energy	0.09
	Landscape	0.67
	Resources	0.20
	Water	-0.04
	Waste	-0.34
	Av: broadly environmental	0.09
	Economic	Economic growth, investment
Employment		1.17
Skills		0.68
Av: broadly economic		1.01
Mixed	Flooding	-0.30
	Land use	1.04

Some summary findings from the research

Research found that, for English core strategies, SAs appear to :

- Partly contribute to integration of sustainability into planning process
- Help to achieve social and economic objectives

But:

- They will not achieve a high level of protection for the environment
- SAs also tend to underestimate negative environmental impacts
- Nor do SAs explain how or why SEE trade-offs are being made

Some ways forward could include, for example:

- Clarification of sustainability trade-off rules
- Identification of environmental capacities for LAs
- Clarification of scope of mitigation measures
- Identification of problems of/implications for higher level policies

Thanks for your attention