

CASTLE POINT
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Sustainability Appraisal
of the Castle Point Borough
Local Development Framework

Adoption Statement for the Essex
Urban Place Supplement

April 2008



Purpose

1. The purpose this report is to set out what the sustainability implications may be of the way in which Castle Point Borough Council propose to adopt the Essex Urban Plan Supplement (UPS) as part of their development plan. The document under consideration is the adoption statement prepared by the Council that gives information on the way the UPS will be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to the existing Castle Point Local Plan and forthcoming Local Development Framework Core Strategy. This sustainability statement therefore reflects the ways in which the adoption of the UPS as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPD) will aid in securing more sustainable development in Castle Point, and what matters may be worth further consideration to improve the performance.
2. The adoption statement was subject to sustainability appraisal at draft stage in November 2007. This earlier sustainability statement, along with consultation responses, was used to inform the content of the final version adoption statements. Details of how the sustainability statement influenced adoption statement is shown in Appendix 1.
3. The sustainability statement as is it is presented here sets out the sustainability implications of the final adoption statement.

Sustainability assessment

4. Sustainable development in this assessment is seeking development that helps achieve greater equity of people and communities now, without harming the ability of future generations to have the same or better standard of life. This encompasses elements of a sound economy and society but fundamentally underpinned by a high quality environment where natural resources are appropriately conserved and efficiently used.
5. This brief assessment of the sustainability implications is part of the wider sustainability appraisal (SA) of the whole Castle Point Local Development Framework. For the SA of the many other parts of the Local Development Framework (LDF) there is a requirement to produce a detailed report of the sustainability implications of policies, following the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive. However, in this case a full SA is not suitable, and a shorter 'sustainability statement' is more appropriate given that the purpose of this task is simply to check the suitability of the adoption process of parts of the UPS to be an SPD. Furthermore the UPS as a whole has already been subject to rigorous SA during its preparation, which can be found in full on the UPS section of the Essex Design Initiative website www.the-edi.co.uk/?section=publications_UPS, rendering full appraisal is unnecessary at this stage.
6. The previous full sustainability appraisal of the UPS also means that this sustainability statement does not reconsider the suitability of the approaches put forward for development in the UPS, and takes it as given that the overall content of the document is compatible with sustainable development.

The Urban Place Supplement Adoption Statement

7. The UPS was produced as part of the Essex Design Initiative and is targeted design guidance for higher density urban development schemes of 50 dwellings and over, although general principles may be applicable to all new residential development. The major purpose of the UPS is to deliver more

sustainable development through the layout and design of this type of development. This UPS approach is fully supported by this sustainability statement in terms of aiming to achieve better development in Essex in line with the objectives of sustainable development. The role of this sustainability statement is to consider how appropriate the approach to adopting the UPS as SPD is, and whether changing this approach would have implications for achieving sustainable development.

8. In order to achieve the desired layout and design of development that will contribute to more sustainable development in the borough it is important to clearly present guidance on what will be expected from development. This will help ensure that development meets defined design and sustainability standards by presenting unambiguous guidance. This therefore requires that the adoption statement clearly set out how the SPD will become a material consideration in determining planning applications. The adoption statement states that the UPS will be adopted in its entirety, although certain specific sections are highlighted where they have particular relevance to policy of the Local Plan and LDF.
9. The purpose of the adoption statement is to set out how the UPS, that covers all of Essex, is applicable to development in Castle Point and should be included as SPD. The adoption statement consists of two main parts relating to the two ways in which the UPS will be adopted. These are how the UPS will be SPD relevant to adopted 'Castle Point Local Plan'; and how it will be SPD to the emerging Local Development Framework Core Strategy.
10. The reason for this division is to ensure that the UPS SPD is compatible with the development plan policy, which differs between the Local Plan and LDF. In adopting the UPS it is important that it does not contradict the policies of these two development plans, in order that the guidance of the relevant sections of the UPS can be implemented successfully and enforced through policy. Avoiding this conflict is important in providing a clear approach to application of the UPS to development, and the need to avoid a situation where the UPS guides development in a way that contradicts policy approach. This means that the section of the adoption statement on application of the UPS under LDF policy is longer than the section on the Local Plan. This reflects that LDF policy is more up-to-date and can respond to the issues of the UPS and ensure suitable policy approaches are in place to implement the more sustainable layout and design of development. However, this does mean there is potential for development coming forward under the Local Plan to not deliver elements of sustainable development due to lack of policy backing.
11. Many of the existing Local Plan policies were developed quite a few years ago with the plan adopted for almost 10 years. Since that time thinking on sustainable development and design has moved on considerably. Therefore restricting the adoption of the UPS to the Local Plan policies would miss out on a variety of potential sustainability benefits, and may not be the best approach in terms of sustainability. For this reason an approach has been used in the adoption statement whereby regional and national policy can be used to enforce approaches in the UPS, so that it can be adopted in a more comprehensive way for the Local Plan.

12. The adoption statement will eventually also need to take into account the adopted LDF policies rather than the current policies stage. Therefore an updated adoption statement will be necessary following adoption of the LDF Core Strategy and Development Control Policies DPD.

Suitability of adopting the Urban Place Supplement as a Supplementary Planning Document

13. Castle Point Borough Council made the decision to adopt the UPS as SPD. An alternative approach would have been to prepare a specific design guide for Castle Point or to have no additional guidance as SPD. In terms of achieving the best from larger developments in Castle Point it will be beneficial in delivering sustainable development to have some type of design guide in place in Castle Point. There would be some advantages in preparing a locally specific guide, such as being able to have more area specific approaches that respond to the particular characteristics of various parts of the Borough. However, this would be a time consuming process and likely to result in few real advantages over the more generic Essex based guide. Adopting the UPS also does not preclude more specific advice being made available where possible through the preparation of development briefs or masterplans.
14. Therefore, rather than Castle Point preparing a unique guide it is entirely suitable for the Borough to adopt the UPS as it has been written specifically to apply to development in Essex, and therefore applicable to Castle Point. The UPS is very thorough in its coverage of issues and does provide an invaluable resource for the design and development of higher density larger new development sites.

Determining sections for specific reference

15. The other matters over which alternative approaches could be considered are on which parts of the UPS should be specifically referred to in the adoption statement. The purpose of highlighting specific sections is to indicate where the are relevant policies in the Local Plan, LDF Core Strategy, or in some instances higher level policy, that can help implementation of the UPS. Therefore the coverage of issues is determined by the policies of the development plans. Where an approach proposed in the UPS cannot be supported in policy it is therefore unsuitable to highlight as it may not be possible for the local planning authority to justify and enforce requirements through their planning decisions.

Sustainability assessment of proposed Urban Place Supplement adoption

16. Certain sections of the UPS and the way it is to be adopted by Castle Point raises the specific matters in terms of trying to achieve more sustainable development.
17. **Sections 1 to 3:** These sections usefully set out the purpose of the UPS and therefore add to the understanding of the document and how it should be implemented. Therefore their adoption as context may help to add clarity to the reasons the UPS has been chosen for adoption as SPD and its role in the design of larger and high density developments.

18. **Section 4:** This part of the UPS relates to an approach to designing new development based on an understanding of the surrounding situation, as part of a 'Context Appraisal'. The advantages for sustainable development of such an approach will be that new development can be properly integrated into its surroundings, with benefits for the built environment and for existing and future residents.
19. For both the Local Plan and LDF the full section is specifically highlighted for inclusion. This helps in providing comprehensive guidance the purpose and methodology of context appraisal, that should help lead to better integrated development.
20. **Section 5:** This section of the UPS deals with issues of designing the form and layout of new development to improve its overall quality and contribution to sustainable development. The approaches set out here have the potential to have a variety of sustainability benefits for development including environmental benefits through the provision of open space for biodiversity, encouraging alternatives to car use and benefits in terms of social sustainability by encouraging the provision of play space, designing out crime and creating a more attractive places to live.
21. The scope of adoption of this section varies between the SPD for the Local Plan to the LDF, with more sections specifically highlighted for the LDF reflecting the up-to-date policies of the Core Strategy that can directly support implementation of the guidance of the UPS.
22. **Section 6:** This part of the UPS relates primarily to the design of actual buildings and how specific technologies or components can be incorporated into development to achieve various benefits for sustainable development. This includes reducing demand for energy and water through development design and technology to incorporating landscaping that will add to local biodiversity. There is also the inclusion of recommended approaches to measuring the sustainability of buildings through using agreed standards of performance.
23. Again more sections of the document have been specifically highlighted for the LDF than Local Plan, despite the adoption of the section in its entirety for both plans. This approach is understandable as the new LDF will contain policies that are more relevant to the UPS. This may mean that development delivered under the existing Local Plan does not have to meet the higher sustainable construction standards that will be required by new policy and associated guidance. Therefore, for successful implementation it will be essential that development management planners within the council have a clear understanding of the way that regional and national policy can be used to enforce the approach to achieve the greater sustainability benefits, as set out in paragraph 11.
24. **Section 7 and the Appendices:** This section and the appendices are not specifically highlighted for adoption in either the SPD for the Local Plan or LDF, although make up part of the overall adopted UPS. The approach is supported by the sustainability statement as there would be little benefit in terms of sustainability that would be gained from highlighting this section and appendices in the adoption statement.

Application of the urban place supplement

25. The final section of the adoption statement sets out how the Council would see the UPS implemented in planning decisions in Castle Point. The approach taken is a pragmatic one that aims to not overwhelm the developer with the large amount of detail and requirements of the UPS. This approach is compatible with sustainable development by ensuring that the aim for high quality layout and design of built development does not hamper the ability of development from coming forward in the first place.
26. However there will be an onus on the development management officers from within the Council to ensure that they are suitably familiar with the content and concepts of the UPS and the specifics of the adoption statement. This will be essential in making sure that all opportunities are taken to achieve better and more sustainable development in Castle Point, that are secured through the knowledge and experience of Council officers working together with developers.

Summary and conclusions

27. Overall adopting the UPS as SPD should help achieve more sustainable development in Castle Point, based on up-to-date approaches in layout, design and construction of development to secure a range of benefits, particularly in terms of social and environmental sustainability.
28. It is proposed that the UPS is adopted in its entirety, with certain sections specifically highlighted where existing or future policy can be used to secure implementation. Inevitably this means that the Local Plan has fewer instances where it is possible to identify direct policy backing for the UPS, given that these policies are not as up-to-date as in the LDF Core Strategy. However, where issues are of particular importance these are highlighted for the Local Plan, with the expectation that regional or national policy can be used for implementation. The sustainability appraisal supports this approach as it should help to secure the successful implementation of sustainable development.
29. The sustainability appraisal also supports the approach to applying the UPS in Castle Point. Although it is worth noting that there is an onus on development management planning officers in Castle Point to be suitably familiar with the content and concepts of the UPS to ensure its successful implementation.

Appendix 1: Incorporating the Sustainability Statement into the Final Version of the Urban Place Supplement Adoption Statement

Summary of the findings of the sustainability appraisal and actions for the adoption statement, prepared by Castle Point Borough Council.

Finding of the sustainability appraisal	Action to improve sustainability of the Adoption Statement
At present the Adoption Statement may not be presenting as clearly as it could how the defined sections have been selected and the purpose or weight attached 'adoption' confers on the parts of the Urban Place Supplement selected.	A Statement of Practice inserted to provide clarification in this regard.
Restricting the current adoption of the UPS to the Local Plan policies will miss out on a variety of potential sustainability benefits, and therefore may be the best approach in terms of sustainability.	Section 6:3 is now to be adopted in its entirety, having regard to PPS1 and PPS Climate Change. This is preemptive of changes to the regulation allowing SPDs to be adopted in support of national and regional policies.
An updated adoption statement may be necessary following adoption of the Core Strategy.	This is accepted – no amendment at this time.
Sections 1-3: It is not clear if these are to be formally adopted.	The adoption statement now makes it clear that the Urban Place Supplement is to be considered in its entirety. However, whilst providing context these sections do not provide policy guidance and are not therefore adopted specifically.
Section 4: Only partially adopted.	Now adopted in its entirety.
Section 5: Only partially adopted in relation to the local plan.	This is now adopted entirely in support of policies EC2 and EC3.
Section 6: Only partially adopted, particularly in relation to the Local Plan.	Part 6:3 is now adopted entirely for the local plan in association with PPS1 and PPS Climate Change. The entire section 6 is adopted in relation to the Core Strategy.
Section 7: This section and appendices are not proposed to be adopted.	The adoption statement now makes it clear that the Urban Place Supplement is to be considered in its entirety. However, whilst providing context these sections do not provide policy guidance and are not therefore adopted specifically.