



# Strategic Environmental Assessments & Sustainability Appraisals

Integrate environmental, social and economic considerations through planning and development.

**pba**  
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# Why you need a Strategic Environmental Assessment or Sustainability Appraisal

Strategic Environmental Assessments assist in the preparation of strategic plans and programmes to support sustainable development.

The process aims to evaluate the effects of proposals and provide a basis for monitoring the effects of implementation.

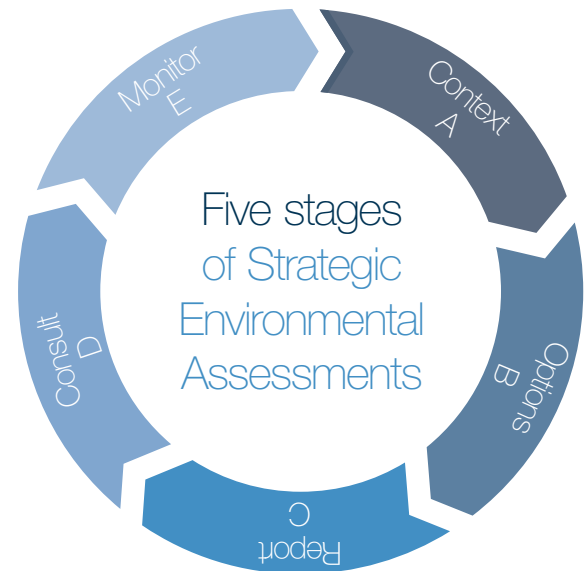
Under the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (2001/42/EC) there is a requirement for an environmental assessment to be undertaken for all plans and programmes. Sustainability Appraisal (SA), in practice in the UK before the EU Directive came into force, goes beyond environmental considerations to embrace the full breadth of sustainable development.

The purpose of SEA / SA is to support sustainable development through the integration of complex environmental, social and economic factors into the preparation of, and revisions to, any development plans. These could include:

- Region Spatial Strategies
- Local Development Frameworks
- Mineral and Waste LDFs
- Development Plan Documents
- Supplementary Planning Documents
- Programmes, Policies and Plans
- Local Transport Plans

This process enables an assessment at strategic plan level whilst identifying very early on the main environmental issues which would have to be addressed as projects come forward.

A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (ODPM September 2005) refers to five key stages in the SEA Process:



- A - Setting the context and objectives, establish the baseline, identify problems and deciding on the scope
- B - Developing and refining the options and assessing effects
- C - Preparing the Sustainability Appraisal Report
- D - Consulting on the plan and finalising the Sustainability Appraisal Report
- E - Monitoring the effects of implementation of the plan

## How we can support your plans

Our broad-based experience and knowledge of development planning, from concept to delivery, supports local authorities in ensuring that plans and programmes address and respond sustainably to environmental issues and in an integrated manner.

### *Stage A – Setting the context, defining the scope*

Our environmental team, supported by specialists, reviews policy and broad strategies within the development plan and sets out the current position to establish the baseline. This leads to the identification of the problems to be addressed and the scope of the appraisal.

### *Stage B – Developing the options, assessing effects*

We work with the project teams to define and evaluate the options and assess the effects on the relevant assessment criteria. This includes geospatial analysis using GIS and other more bespoke modelling such as noise, air quality, flood risk and groundwater.

### *Stage C – Preparing the Sustainability Appraisal Report*

It is at this stage where the effectiveness of our approach to the SA process can provide the most value, as the content of the report, its format and the outcomes can be drawn on to support the consultations on the plans and programmes being assessed.

### *Stage D – Consulting on the plan*

The consultation process can take a variety of forms and result in many conflicting responses. We can collate and interpret responses and provide analysis of the outcomes to assist in finalising plans and programmes and the SA Report.

### *Stage E – Monitoring the effects of implementation*

This can be the most challenging aspect. Using the baseline information and the geospatial data, we set up clear monitoring criteria based on the stated objectives and indicators in the report to enable an effective and valuable outcome to this cyclical process.

“SEAs support the integration of complex environmental and socio-economic factors into the development plan.”

# Effective delivery of strategic thinking

## Strategic assessment of policies, plans, programmes and development

### *Reading Borough Council*

Our Sustainability Appraisal informed the Local Transport Plan (LTP2). The complex interactions were managed using GIS-based assessment techniques. The Department for Transport awarded an “excellent” rating to the whole submission and supported the funding plans.

*Pictured right:* Major improvements to M4 Junction 11 now under construction.

### *Kent*

We monitor plans and environmental conditions to comply with planning conditions for a major urban development over a 15-20 year timeframe.

### *Devon*

We conduct Strategic Assessments of potential renewable energy resources and Environmental Assessments to inform transport planning policies.

### *Wales*

Our Health Impact Assessment considered the effectiveness and impacts of proposed waste management policies.

### *River Basins, England*

We assess the environmental, social and economic impact of flood management policies and plans through Strategic Flood Risk Assessments.



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