

**19 June 2012 Issue 4: Sustainability Appraisal  
Yate Town Council ID: 936417**

1. The core of our objection here is that the Sustainability Appraisal does include a section on each allocated location for development, but does not include a relative appraisal. It includes a section on Filton for example but does not consider whether Filton offers a more or less sustainable location than other locations. Within Yate and Chipping Sodbury it comments on which possible development sites are least/most sustainable but does not then measure the most sustainable in Yate/Sodbury against sites elsewhere.
2. Our understanding of the requirements for a Sustainability Appraisal pursuant to European Sustainability Appraisal requirements (SEA Directive 2001/42/EC) is that the SA needs to focus on environmental issues, and needs to consider the relative merits of different locations. The question the SA is required to answer is not how sustainable is this location, but whether the policy as a whole (i.e. the total housing and other allocations) is sustainable and whether there are other more sustainable locations for it than the ones chosen.
3. South Gloucestershire's Core Strategy however explicitly rejects the EU definition of a Sustainability Appraisal and adopts instead an integrated economic, social and environmental assessment (para 1.26). It says it has appraised "alternatives to ensure that the most sustainable options have been chosen" – but this is not the case and even if it were the case, if it is done against the UK SA approach of the three prongs rather than the EU requirement for an SA to explore the environmental impacts it is a flawed assessment. Public bodies are required to comply with EU law, and it is no defence for the Local Authority to say they are complying with UK regulation, if the UK Regulation is itself failing to comply with Directive obligations.
4. We note for example, that development on Severnside is rejected on the simple basis that it is within the 1:100 flood plain, using the 'bright line' offered by the Environment Agency flood map and underlying modelling.
5. However when it comes to Yate Sodbury it notes that there is a transportation issue in that any allocation for residential housing at Yate Sodbury is poorly located to major centres of employment by public transport, a gap that the plan struggles to plug. The plan fails to allocate appropriate land for employment uses and relies on filling the gap via homeworking which lack an evidential base for the modelling. Accordingly, an allocation at Yate provides for a commuting requirement which is poorly located by public transport. It will accordingly generate more commuter movements by private vehicles than other locations closer to centres of employment or better linked on foot/cycle/public transport. It undermines the express commitment to 'self containment' in para 1.3.
6. The SA does not then consider the relative merits of development at Severnside or Yate/Sodbury. It assumes the trumping power of the consequences of climate change (increased flood risks) but does not weigh that against the carbon footprint of development at Yate/Sodbury in terms of travel to work by private

cars. The plan consequently ends up favouring development in a location that will cause more climate change effects – putting consequences mitigation above causation mitigation. This may be an appropriate decision but the point is not considered.

7. Put simply, we cannot see that the duty to consider the relative merits of different sites, and whether there are options which are more sustainable in environmental terms has been met. We are mindful the European requirement is for a pure environmental appraisal as opposed to the domestic documentation which focuses on the multi-pronged UK approach to sustainability i.e. balancing economic, social and environmental. We understand from the St Albans Case that as a matter of law the SA needs to comply with European law and believe it fails to do so.