



**Strategic Environmental Assessment of Local
Implementation Plans: Problems and Opportunities of
Relevance to SEAs for Local Implementation Plans**

by P Cole

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IMPLEMENTATION PLANS: PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF
RELEVANCE TO SEAs FOR LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION PLANS**

Version: Final

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this report is to assist London Boroughs with the Strategic Environmental Assessment of their Local Implementation Plans. This report should be read together with the Advice report prepared by C4S/TRL for London Boroughs in September 2004, and the following guidance notes relating to stage A of the SEA for an LIP:

- Strategic Environmental Assessment of Local Implementation Plans: Sources of baseline data for stage A
- Strategic Environmental Assessment of Local Implementation Plans: Scoping report and template
- Strategic Environmental Assessment of Local Implementation Plans: SEA objectives for stage A

The identification of environmental problems and opportunities occurs in Stage A of a Strategic Environmental Assessment. This document presents a number of example problems and opportunities that could be relevant to LIPs. It also explains the role that SEA workshops might play within the identification of problems and opportunities relevant to specific London Boroughs.

Chapter 2 of the report sets out the context for this part of stage A. It highlights the reason for the inclusion of this process within SEA, and suggests sources from which environmental problems and opportunities might be identified.

Chapter 3 illustrates the benefits of organising an SEA workshop and suggests a possible ‘invitation list’ and format for the event.

Chapter 4 provides tables of example problems and opportunities of relevance to the LIPs of London Boroughs. The tables examine possible implications of the problems and also highlight the SEA topics of relevance in each case.

Chapter 5 goes on to discuss how the results of this identification process might be presented for its particular target audience. It finishes by examining how the outputs of this problems/opportunities identification process might be linked to later stages of the SEA.

Users of this document are also advised to seek out the results of previous environmental workshops and environmental problems/opportunities identification exercises in their Boroughs. In particular, a Borough’s State of the Environment/ Sustainability report should be checked. Boroughs are also advised to ask neighbouring Boroughs which sources of information are proving useful to them in their LIP/SEA preparation, and which objectives they are using.

2 Overview of Environmental Problems and Opportunities

The SEA Regulations require that environmental problems be identified. Although not a requirement it is also good plan making practice to identify any opportunities for enhancement or improvement. By understanding the problems and opportunities early, these can help form both the SEA and the LIP objectives. Identification of problems and opportunities is best conducted on a case by case basis at the individual Borough level, however there are generic and recurring environmental problems and opportunities that apply across the London Boroughs and peripheries. This advice note will identify those generic problems, opportunities and issues. These will need to be added to or refined by Borough level knowledge and information to ensure all local issues have been identified.

In addition to using the generic problems and opportunities as a basis for identifying Borough level issues, the list can be used to identify problems and issues that effect neighbouring Boroughs and highlight where the need exists for inter-borough working.

Clearly some problems will already have been identified through past work, e.g. has an Air Quality Management Area been defined. The Mayor's Transport and Air Quality Strategies also identify specific London wide problems, issues and opportunities. These sources form the base of the identification of problems and issues across the London Boroughs, however they have been supplemented with other problems and issues identified in relation to townscape, biodiversity, heritage, climatic factors etc.

The identification of environmental problems and opportunities should be undertaken in parallel with the other processes required for Stage A of the SEA. The identification of problems and opportunities should not therefore become an onerous additional task.

Stage A is best tackled in an iterative fashion, with 'problems, issues and opportunities' becoming apparent whilst carrying out the following steps of the SEA:

- The review of other plans and programmes.
- The collection of baseline information.

The benefits of carrying out the identification of problems and opportunities are realised when setting and refining objectives. A generic set of SEA objectives can be 'localised', when the issues particular to a Borough are known.

Workshops can be useful for directly tackling the identification of environmental problems and opportunities, along with highlighting sources of baseline data. Suggestions for who to invite to such an event, and what to include within the event, are elaborated upon in chapter 3.

3 SEA Workshops

SEA workshops provide an effective means of drawing out some particularly relevant problems, issues, and opportunities for ones borough. These are typically two hour or half day events, facilitated by those who are responsible for the SEA of the LIP. The workshop should not be too rigid in structure and it should be directed by the flow of discussion of the participants. As such, organisation of the event should not be to arduous for the facilitator.

Table 1 below, illustrates some possible attendees of an SEA workshop:

Internal and external parties to consider when arranging an SEA workshop	
Internal (within council)	
Transport Planners	
Land-use Planners	
Transport Implementation Officers	
Research and Information Officers	
Environmental Health Officers (those concerned with air quality, noise, and vibration)	
Ecology Officers	
Environmental Policy/Impact Officers	
Community Safety Officers	
Crime/Nuisance Officers	
Historic Conservation Officers	
Urban Design Officers	
Social Inclusion/Community Planning Officers	
Environmental Management/Sustainable Development Officers	
External	
Representatives from Planning Departments in Neighbouring Boroughs	
Representatives from the Statutory Environmental Bodies (English Nature, English Heritage, Environment Agency, and the Countryside Agency).	
Representatives from Local Interest Groups and Environmental Action Groups, for example:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends of the Earth, • London Wildlife Trust/Other Urban Wildlife Groups, • Archaeological Society, • Borough Regeneration Trust, • Transport 2000, • SUSTRANS, • Any London Partnerships e.g. West London Alliance. 	

Table 1: A list of possible parties that could be invited to attend an SEA workshop.

This list is neither exhaustive nor obligatory. It will be up to the individual Borough to decide who best to invite to attend such a workshop. This should include only those best placed to be able to provide useful input into the process.

The aim of the workshop is to identify particular environmental problem areas within the Borough by calling upon the knowledge of a wide range of skill sets, covering as many of the SEA topics as possible.

Those attending the workshops may also have some innovative ideas on how problems might be mitigated and the boroughs environment might be enhanced through the plan.

The ‘street level’ knowledge of participants will help to keep objectives relevant and realistic. Also, encouraging involvement by attendee’s may facilitate participation and consultation at later stages in the SEA process.

The workshops should be planned with sufficient flexibility to take into account the uncertainties about who might attend, and which issues may arise. Although essentially a forum for discussion, a suggested agenda is provided below:

Local Implementation Plan and the Strategic Environmental Assessment

Workshop

- 1 Introduction to the session and brief setting of the context of the Local Implementation Plan.
- 2 Introductions and setting the context of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)
- 3 What are the important environmental features and opportunities for environmental improvement that could be influenced by the LIP? Which of these need to be identified as “SEA objectives”?
- 4 What are the next steps and how do you wish to be involved?
- 5 Feedback

It may also be useful to prepare a draft range of generic SEA objectives for your LIP before the workshop, as there may be some scope within the workshop to try and ‘localise’ these objectives.

LIPS are concerned with relatively small geographic areas. For this reason, many impacts from a proposed scheme in one borough are likely to be felt in surrounding boroughs too.

The cross boundary nature of impacts in London also gives increasing significance to the assessment of cumulative effects. Therefore, it should be emphasised that inviting representatives from neighbouring boroughs to your SEA workshop might add significant value to the process. Attending workshops organised by other boroughs should also highlight many of environmental problems and opportunities that will be relevant for your borough too, thus making the process more resource efficient for all involved.

4 Example Problems and Opportunities Relevant to the LIPS of London Boroughs

4.1 Introduction

The following tables (Tables 2, 3, and 4) identify some example problems and opportunities along with their implications for the relevant SEA topics. These problems and opportunities should be developed in parallel to the identification of transport problems in the LIP. As such, these tables may serve as more of a 'cross-check' in some cases.

Many of these issues have arisen in other Transport Plan SEAs. The comments in 4.2 have been adapted to suit the London situation. In some places, the tables attempt to provide examples on a local level. However, it is important that boroughs take these examples and then use their own local knowledge to customize them so that they best suit that particular boroughs' situation.

Consideration of cumulative and cross boundary issues should play a significant part in this process. Therefore, approaching these issues in a strategic manner is vital.

4.2 Example problems and opportunities

These tables illustrate environmental problems and opportunities for environmental enhancement beyond the 'status quo'. It should however be recognised that the identification of an environmental problem will almost always lead to the realisation of an opportunity for amelioration and so many opportunities may only become obvious later in this process.

Table 2 below, identifies some problems relevant to the LIPs of London Boroughs:

Problems	SEA Topics/Priority; Implications
Increasing congestion (vehicle mileage and car ownership).	<p>Congestion Air Quality Human Health - both in terms of poor air quality and safety for road users and non motorised users (NMUs).</p> <p>This is a good example of a problem that might be best tackled at a more strategic level, as congestion is often cross boundary, and the measures to tackle it may have knock on effects on surrounding boroughs (and hence are often best implemented across several boroughs at once e.g. parking policy).</p>
Congestion related to tourist traffic on key spinal routes and around attractions.	<p>Congestion Cultural Heritage - noise/vibration, and effects of poor air quality can affect sites of cultural heritage both physically (e.g. increased weathering), and in its setting. Air Quality Human Health - both in terms of poor air quality and safety for NMUs around these sites.</p>
Rise in motorcycle casualties.	Human Health
Climate change.	Human Health and Population - green house gas emissions from transport contribute to global warming and its associated impacts – in London the main impact will be via flooding.
Traffic growth rate restrictions.	Different boroughs will have different commitments.
Degraded transport infrastructure, limiting	Population - certain areas may have less public

economic development and increasing social exclusion.	transport coverage, decreasing accessibility for certain parts of the community to key services and places of employment. Material Assets - businesses may lose out both in terms of access to customers, and additional employee commuting time. Congestion - increased car usage as a consequence of inadequate public transport may lead to increased commuting times and increased air pollution.
Increased use of 4 by 4 vehicles, and Sports Utility Vehicles (SUVs).	Human Health - SUVs are generally 'less safe' for other road users and NMUs, in terms of consequence of impact and restricted vision. Air Quality/Climate Change – increased emissions of noxious gases and Carbon Dioxide. Congestion - potential problems of blocking smaller roads when parked or loading/unloading, due to larger size.
Effects of street furniture on streetscape and its character.	Townscape and Cultural Heritage - signs, lighting, CCTV, and speed calming measures might all affect the character of an area – it is important to consider the cumulative impact of these measures.
Noise 'blackspots' identified by noise mapping and 'complaints records' from borough.	Human Health and Noise - transport related noise may cause a large number of complaints, with the new noise mapping of London providing an evidence base for potential complaints.
Conflict between traffic and pedestrians in borough centre.	Human Health and Population - negative safety impacts, and the fostering of a negative perception of borough centres – decreasing their viability.
Abuse of cycle route and footpath networks by motorcycle users.	Human Health and Population - negative safety impacts, and the fostering of a negative perception of cycling and walking as viable modes of travel.
Pressures on UK BAP habitats (this may be relevant to a number of the outlying boroughs).	Biodiversity – schemes involving new build and maintenance projects may affect priority habitats, along with the effects of noise/vibration and decreased air quality.

Table 3 below, identifies some opportunities relevant to the LIPs of London Boroughs:

Opportunities	SEA Topics/Priority; Implications
Integration of both different forms of public transport (e.g. train and bus), and public transport with walking and cycling (e.g. secure cycle facilities outside main commuting stations).	Human Health and Population - opportunity to increase accessibility for the whole community to key services and areas of employment, as well as encouraging cycling/walking. Air Quality and Climate Change - opportunity to reduce emissions to air. Congestion
Opportunity to enhance biodiversity.	Biodiversity - opportunities may exist to increase access to designated areas whilst preserving their integrity from transport related development – it may also be possible to enhance existing assets, e.g. waterways. Population - increasing access to conservation areas for all sectors of the community will enhance their

	understanding of environmental issues.
Opportunity to increase use of waterways in borough for recreational purposes and freight movement.	Population and Human Health - an opportunity to provide more leisure and sports activities for all sections of the community, as well as increasing the general aesthetic value of the environment. Air Quality - shifting transport of some freight to waterways would cut the emissions from road based freight transport and possibly reduce 'nuisance' impacts caused by HGVs including noise and vibration. This is a good example of an opportunity for enhancement that might be best approached at a more strategic level in conjunction with surrounding boroughs, as waterways in London commonly cross borough boundaries.
Use of recycled or secondary aggregates for new build and maintenance work on local roads, cycleways, footpaths, and public transport facilities.	Material Assets - an opportunity may lie in the use of demolition waste, particularly in boroughs where there is a large amount of redevelopment occurring.
Conversion to energy efficient lighting and other energy saving devices in public transport facilities, roadside lighting, and general street furniture.	Material Assets - an opportunity for both economic and environmental savings. Climate Change - energy efficient equipment reduces air emissions and natural resource use.
The installation of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) at key points around the borough.	Water/Biodiversity - recent heavy rainfall events in London have seen severe pollution events in local waterways, there is an opportunity for installing SUDS for new and existing transport infrastructure. Human Health and Population - opportunity to reduce risk of flooding, particularly important for some boroughs in light of the Environment Agency's flood mapping of London.

When seen in differing lights, some potential problems can also be possible opportunities. The difference between an issue being an opportunity for enhancement, or turning into an actual problem, is often dependent on the scale of the effect (e.g. carrying capacity of designated sites). However, sometimes the problems and opportunities can co-exist, with an issue having positive effects on one SEA topic, whilst simultaneously having negative effects on another (e.g. road humps).

Table 4 below, identifies some problems which also provide potential opportunities for enhancement, relevant to the LIPs of London Boroughs:

Bold Red Text = SEA topics that might see enhancement through opportunities identified

Bold Black Text = SEA topics that might be negatively impacted upon by problems identified

Problems AND Potential Opportunities	SEA Topics/Priority; Implications
Increasing access to sites of cultural heritage (and sites of natural heritage).	Landscape/Townscape/Cultural Heritage/Biodiversity - increasing access to these sites may exceed their 'carrying capacity' in terms of number of visitors and increased car/coach numbers – increasing congestion, noise/vibration, and air pollution. Population - transport developments may positively

	contribute to the SEA objectives by increasing access to these sites.
Crime and sense of security on public transport.	<p>Population and Human Health - crime and the perception of lack of security can be a problem particularly prior to embarkation and at disembarkation.</p> <p>Population - opportunity to increase public transport patronage by increasing security on public transport and its related facilities.</p> <p>Townscape and Cultural Heritage - measures to reduce crime and increase sense of security might have secondary environmental impacts which should be considered, e.g. CCTV impacts on streetscape.</p>
Speed calming measures, e.g. road humps.	<p>Human Health - decreased traffic related mortality as traffic speeds drop.</p> <p>Air Quality - some speed calming measures increase emissions to air e.g. road humps.</p> <p>Human Health and Population - 'nuisance' caused by increased noise and vibration as vehicles negotiate speed calming measures, as well as risks to human health from increased emissions to air.</p>
Air Quality Management Areas within the borough.	<p>Air Quality - AQMAs reveal the problem areas and provide an opportunity for improving air quality in problem areas.</p> <p>Human Health</p>
Limited provision of safe cycle routes on roads.	<p>Human Health - risk to safety to cyclists, this often fosters perceptions of roads as unsafe places – decreasing the number of cyclists.</p> <p>Human Health - increasing the number of safe routes provides an opportunity to increase human health, increase safety, and decrease air emissions.</p>
Rising levels of obesity and diabetes.	<p>Human Health - lack of recreational/sporting opportunities both in terms of access to these types of services, and a negative perception of cycling/walking.</p> <p>Human Health - opportunity exists to increase access for all sections of the community to key services, to promote cycling/walking, and to improve cycling/walking facilities within the borough.</p>

5 Presenting environmental problems and opportunities

5.1 Introduction

Once environmental problems and opportunities have been identified, they need to be documented and presented.

The tables used to present problems and opportunities (and their implications) in chapter 4 may provide a useful template for encapsulating the information. However, some SEAs of Local Transport Plans have preferred a list type approach, simply splitting into problems and opportunities. Whatever approach to presentation is chosen, it could ideally include:

- The problem or opportunity itself,
- The SEA topics related to that problem or opportunity,
- The implications of the problems, and the opportunities provided by the LIP for mitigation/enhancement.

It may also be useful to provide specific locations when relevant and some indication of importance. If the data is presented in a list or table style, those problems and opportunities which are most important and feasible should be included first. The importance of different problems and opportunities will vary from Borough to Borough dependent on their particular situation.

5.2 The target audience

The key issue when presenting the data is to focus on the readers.

The readers of the environmental report include consultation bodies, non-governmental organisations and the public. Most importantly, many of these people will not have the same level of technical understanding as the Borough staff who write the environmental report. This situation points clearly to the need for:

- (i) Text to be included within the environmental report that provides a context for these problems and opportunities and their implications for the SEA and LIP;
- (ii) The text to be free of jargon, abbreviations and complex phrasing.

5.3 Linking the problems and opportunities identified to possible solutions

The SEA regulations do not require solutions to the identified problems and opportunities to be documented at this stage. However, when identifying problems it is often logical to start considering solutions at the same time. This will facilitate the identification of alternatives and mitigation measures in stages B and C of the SEA process.

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