

Sustainability, Sustainable Development and Sustainability Appraisal



What is sustainability?

Generally speaking, sustainability is the ability of something to keep going or endure. At present, there are doubts about the sustainability of our current way of life—as individuals, as nations and as a planet.

What are the three elements of sustainability?

In terms of the way we live, sustainability is often described as having three essential elements—economic, environmental and social. Imagine a three-legged stool, with sustainability sat on top: to provide sustainability with stable support, each leg must be equal and strong—otherwise the stool will wobble and collapse.

What is sustainable development?

Greg Clark MP, former Minister for Planning, explained that *sustainable* means ensuring that better lives for ourselves don't mean worse lives for future generations and that *development* means growth. The so-called classic definition of sustainable development, which originates from the United Nations, is *development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*.

What is Sustainability Appraisal?

Sustainability Appraisal is a method for assessing your options according to how well they would achieve sustainable development; and it helps in testing ideas by identify their good points and bad points. The first part of the process is agreeing a set of local objectives for achieving sustainable development; options or ideas are then rated according to how well they would achieve those objectives. If an option/idea gets a poor rating, it can be ditched in favour of any other higher-rated options/ideas or it can be worked on, improved and re-tested, as many times as necessary, until the right solution is found. Sustainability Appraisal is a legal requirement and is part of the formal plan-making process.