

DRAFT V7

**SKELMERSDALE VISION AND MASTERPLAN  
SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL**

**SCOPING REPORT**

**MAY 2006**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In October 2004, West Lancashire District Council, English Partnerships and the North West Development Agency commissioned a team of consultants, led by Broadway Malyan, to prepare a Vision for Skelmersdale. The Vision is the first stage in delivering a creative yet viable town centre for Skelmersdale and will be the foundation for a self-sustaining, vibrant and evolving town for a justifiably proud community with a truly viable future. The aim of the project was to identify the key structural, economic, social, environmental and identity problems of the town, lift the aspirations of the local community and formulate strategies to inform a Development Framework which will deliver projects on the ground.
- 1.2 The Vision was informed by extensive and on-going consultation with the community and a baseline report identifying key issues and opportunities. This Vision will now be developed further and will form the basis of a Development Framework for the town. This will become a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and will be used to deliver and inform development in the town.

### **Purpose of this report**

- 1.3 A requirement of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 is that local development documents, including SPDs, must be subject to a Sustainability Appraisal (SA), as a means of assessing the potential social, environmental and economic effects of the plan and its policies. In addition, the EU Directive 2001/42/EC requires Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA):

*“to provide for a high level of protection of the environment and contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development.”*

### *What is Sustainable Development?*

- 1.4 Sustainable development is a term that has been commonly used since the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The principle concept of sustainable

development is to balance economic progress with social and environmental needs and not take resources that future generations may need to survive. The UK Government's vision of sustainable development is contained within the document 'Securing the Future, the National Sustainable Development Strategy 2005'. This document contains the shared UK principles to achieve sustainable development which are:-

- Living within Environmental Limits
- Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society
- Achieving a sustainable economy
- Promoting good governance
- Using sound science responsibly

- 1.5 Sustainable development principles are now embedded within international and national law. It is recognised that land use planning is a key element in seeking to achieve sustainable development, and therefore sustainability is at the core of the modern planning system.
- 1.6 The purpose of Sustainability Appraisal is to promote sustainable development through the integration of social, environmental and economic considerations into the preparation of revisions of Regional Spatial Strategies (RSSs) and for new or revised Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), as in the case of the Skelmersdale Development Framework. It is therefore seen as a key way of ensuring that the policies and objectives of planning documents will be as sustainable as possible, or will ensure ways of mitigating any unsustainable affects.
- 1.7 The Sustainability Appraisal for the Skelmersdale Development Framework will incorporate the requirements of the EU SEA Directive through a single appraisal process, but those elements that address the Directive will be identifiable. The Sustainability Appraisal will identify and assess strategic options and will choose a preferred option that reflects environmental, economic and social sustainable development principles balanced with commercial realism and aspirational objectives and constraints. The intention

is that the Sustainability Appraisal will proactively inform the Development Framework rather than be an academic exercise.

- 1.8 Best practice guidance produced by the Government, in the form of 'Sustainability Appraisal of Regional Spatial Strategies and Local development Frameworks' (ODPM, November 2005) and 'A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive' (ODPM, September 2005) will be followed within the Sustainability Appraisal process. The former piece of guidance identifies five stages to Sustainability Appraisal, these are:-

**Stage A: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope**

- **A1:** Identifying other relevant policies, plans and programmes, and sustainable development objectives.
- **A2:** Collecting baseline information.
- **A3:** Identifying sustainability issues and problems.
- **A4:** Developing the SA framework.
- **A5:** Consulting on the scope of the SA.

**Stage B: Developing and refining options and assessing effects**

- **B1:** Testing the SPD objectives against the SA framework.
- **B2:** Developing the SPD options.
- **B3:** Predicting the effects of the draft SPD.
- **B4:** Evaluating the effects the draft SPD.
- **B5:** Considering ways of mitigating adverse effects and maximising beneficial effects.
- **B6:** Proposing measures to monitor the significant effects of implementing the SPD.

**Stage C: Preparing the Sustainability Appraisal Report**

- **C1:** Preparing SA Report.

**Stage D: Consulting on draft SPD and Sustainability Appraisal Report**

- **D1:** Public participation on the SA Report and the draft SPD.
- **D2:** Assessing significant changes.
- **D3:** Making decisions and providing information.

**Stage E: Monitoring the significant effects of implementing the SPD**

- **E1:** Finalising aims and methods for monitoring.
- **E2:** Responding to adverse effects.

- 1.9 This report presents the first stage of the Sustainability Appraisal (Stage A), which concerns the scope of the appraisal. Section 2 will describe the objectives of the Development Framework and SA in more detail. Section 3

will link the SA and Development Framework to other strategies, plans and programmes. Section 4 will identify baseline information regarding social, economic and environmental aspects of Skelmersdale. Section 5 will identify sustainability issues and objectives and Section 6 will set out the sustainability appraisal framework. Finally, Section 7 will identify how comments can be made throughout the sustainability appraisal process.

## **2.0 THE VISION AND DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK OBJECTIVES**

2.1 The Vision has put in place a set of principles, which will contribute to the branding of the town centre and ultimately lead to a new identity. This reflects the current lifestyles of the people of Skelmersdale as well as their aspirations for a new sense of civic focus and community. The Vision encompasses five 'Vision Statements'. These are to:-

1. *Re-connect the town centre and the community through the building of new roads and footpaths.*
2. *Increase the number of residents in the town centre and diversify the style and range of residential accommodation available.*
3. *Make Skelmersdale a retail, leisure and recreation centre of excellence within the Northwest.*
4. *Ensure high quality design is key to creating a vibrant town centre.*
5. *Ensure the parks and open space around the town centre are more accessible to Skelmersdale communities and visitors.*

2.2 The Sustainability Appraisal aims to ensure that as the Vision develops into a Development Framework, the different options available are assessed in the light of social, economic and environmental indicators in order that this will help to identify the preferred option as well as helping to identify the implications of the preferred option chosen so that any impacts can be mitigated or maximised.

2.3 The Development Framework objectives have not yet been identified, as these will be created out of the most preferable options, or alternative development scenarios, for the town centre. The objectives will however integrate the Vision Statements.

## Strategic Objectives

- 2.4 The principle of development and large-scale regeneration in Skelmersdale has clear links to other planning documents and their strategic objectives. It is important to identify these links in order to ensure that the general principle of development is acceptable and to ensure that the objectives of the Development Framework are in line with those at more strategic levels.
- 2.5 At the wider spatial level, Regional Planning Guidance (now the Regional Spatial Strategy, RSS) for the North West identifies Skelmersdale as an area within the North West Metropolitan Area where wide ranging regeneration and environmental enhancement should be secured. The Draft Replacement Joint Lancashire Structure Plan supports development in Skelmersdale to support its role as a key centre for public transport, employment and services and to support regeneration.
- 2.6 At the more local and detailed level, Policy S6 of the adopted West Lancashire Local Plan permits extensions and changes of use within Skelmersdale in order to improve its vitality and viability. The justification for the policy states that:-

*“The main shopping area in Skelmersdale is the enclosed purpose built Concourse Centre with shops mainly at first floor level and vehicle servicing at ground level. It was extensively refurbished in 1989-1991, when a three storey extension and entrance hall / atrium were added, together with a three level car park. It offers a limited range of units and is not capable of accommodating an up-market supermarket.*

*The Council is therefore keen to promote a wider range of shopping opportunities to cater for Skelmersdale’s expanding population. This will also reduce the town’s need to rely on facilities outside the District. The Shopping Area includes land between the Asda supermarket and the Concourse Centre, which could accommodate additional development to improve facilities in the Town Centre, including the development of non-food retail, leisure or other appropriate town centre uses which will reduce the need to travel to such developments outside the District.”*

- 2.7 Policy S8 refers to leisure non-food retail and leisure developments and permits these within the town centre providing they form a comprehensive scheme and are fully integrated into the Town Centre. The supporting text states that:-

*“The Council will also encourage leisure, entertainment and other appropriate Town Centre uses in this area, in addition to retail use, to diversify the range of uses in the town centre and to attract pedestrian movement between the various sites. Pedestrian and cycle links between these sites and the Concourse Centre, the Tawd Valley and nearby residential areas will need to be improved and strengthened, and the buildings and car parking should be located to encourage dual purpose trips.”*

- 2.8 Policy S10 deals with the design of development in the town centre and states that:-

*“New developments in Skelmersdale Town Centre, which includes the Shopping Area and the Business Areas, will be permitted provided that:-*

- (i) sites are planned and laid out on a comprehensive basis;*
- (ii) the design and layout of buildings relates well to any adjoining or adjacent buildings, the area generally and the natural features of each site in terms of siting, scale, orientation, topography, design, detailing and materials;*
- (iii) landscaping and boundary treatments are provided to reinforce and enhance the visual and ecological characteristics of the site and its surroundings;*
- (iv) adequate screening is provided where necessary to any unsightly feature of the development, such as car parks and service yards which should be sited so as to minimise visual intrusion. Security fencing should be located to the internal edge of any perimeter landscaping;*
- (v) access, parking and road layout comply with the Council’s approved standards to allow safe and convenient access for cars, delivery vehicles, cyclists, people with disabilities, the elderly and people with young children and, where appropriate, makes suitable provision for public transport including bus lay-bys, bus stops and/or bus setting down areas and waiting areas for taxis;*
- (vi) the development can be fully integrated into the built form of the centre both in townscape terms and by maximising and enhancing pedestrian*

*and cycle accessibility through the centre and between the principal buildings and the surrounding parking provision;*

- (vii) proposals are designed, laid out and landscaped to maximise the energy conservation potential of any development and to minimise the risk of crime;*
- (viii) the proposal does not prejudice the possible development of a larger area; and*
- (ix) proposals do not result in surface water drainage or sewage related pollution problems.*

*The developer will be expected, under the terms of an Agreement under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, to provide or contribute to appropriate measures to create safe and convenient pedestrian links and routes and cycleways from the development to other parts of the Town Centre.*

#### *Justification*

*Unlike Ormskirk, there is no traditional building style or dominant natural material used throughout the town centre. When designing new developments it is therefore necessary to ensure that the proposal relates to the scale and nature of the adjacent land uses, as much as to the functional nature of the development. Many of the sites abut residential areas and the whole of the town centre is surrounded by wooded cloughs. New development must respect these features and use them to their maximum advantage. Pedestrian and cycle links between the development sites and the Concourse Centre, the Tawd Valley and the nearby residential areas will need to be improved and strengthened, and the buildings and parking areas located to encourage dual purpose trips."*

- 2.9 The aim to improve Skelmersdale centre is strengthened in the draft Replacement Local Plan, which contains as one of its main objectives an intent to direct most new development in the district to Skelmersdale. The Replacement Local Plan states that the vision for West Lancashire in 2016 is:-

*"that the District will be an attractive and affordable place to live containing sustainable communities where people have good access to quality jobs and services. This supports the Community Strategy Vision which is to make West Lancashire among the best, safest and greenest places to live in the Country, with local services that are second to none"*

- 2.10 Following on from this, the key aims for the Replacement Local Plan are to:-

- Meet the development needs of the District with an emphasis on regenerating those areas of the District that have been in decline;
- Ensure that any new development arising is done so in a sustainable way with least impact on the District's unique environment;
- Make the District accessible and well provided for in terms of facilities and services.
- Recognise the importance of business development to the West Lancashire economy.

2.11 The objectives set in order to achieve these aims include:-

- Each area of the District should retain its own distinctive character through the protection of assets and good design of development.
- Future development (such as housing, employment and community facilities) should be concentrated within the existing built up areas of Skelmersdale, Ormskirk, and Burscough.
- Development should be attracted which creates more varied jobs for local people and existing jobs should be safeguarded.
- The town centres of Skelmersdale, Ormskirk, and Burscough need to continue and expand their roles as the hubs of shopping, culture/leisure and service provision in our District.
- Enhanced cultural, leisure and tourism related development should be located throughout the District provided that it adds to the local environmental quality.
- There needs to be marked improvement to the visual quality of new development. Development should be designed to allow access for all and to reduce the risk and fear of crime.
- People should be encouraged to use environmentally friendly modes of transport, through enhanced public transport, cycling and walking facilities.
- The environment needs to be improved substantially in several areas, including Skelmersdale former New Town housing estates, Skelmersdale

Town Centre, and the former rail corridor between Ormskirk and Skelmersdale.

2.12 Policy DS1 refers to the location of new development and states that:-

*“The majority of new housing, employment and retail development, other than that required to meet purely local needs, will be expected to be located in the regeneration priority area of Skelmersdale. Preference will be given to development on sites which are on previously developed land and are easily accessible to the town centres by public transport, cycling and pedestrian links.”*

2.13 Policy DE11 refers to the redevelopment of Skelmersdale town centre and states that:-

*“Proposals for the redevelopment of Skelmersdale Town Centre, as defined on the Proposals Map, will be supported provided that they:-*

- i. are of a comprehensive nature based on an approved masterplan;*
- ii. include a range of uses including non food retail, leisure, entertainment, office space and residential;*
- iii. provide a major improvement in the facilities, services and attractiveness of the town centre;*
- iv. include provision for health care and educational facilities;*
- v. demonstrate good practice in urban design with development being innovative and of the highest possible quality;*
- vi. prioritise convenience for pedestrians, cyclists and users of public transport over the car and include proposals to enhance or redevelop the bus station.*
- vii. are compatible with the existing uses in the Concourse town centre;*
- viii. support the ongoing project to develop a new town centre park; and*
- ix. sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of existing centres.*

*Development which would prejudice the implementation of such a scheme, for example piecemeal proposals on key sites within the Town Centre, will not be permitted.”*

### 3.0 LINKS TO OTHER STRATEGIES, PLANS AND PROGRAMMES

- 3.1 The first stage in the Sustainability Appraisal process involves the identification of other relevant policies, plans, programmes and sustainability objectives. These will inform the formation of the sustainability objectives against which the Development Framework will be assessed.
- 3.2 **Appendix 1** provides a list of the plans and strategies that will influence the Development Framework and the sustainability objectives, and this includes documents from international, European, national, regional, sub-regional, county, district and local levels. Information on the relationships between these documents and the options for the Development Framework will enable potential synergies to be exploited and any inconsistencies and constraints to be addressed. Key targets and objectives within these documents have therefore been identified and are contained within a contextual review at **Appendix 2**.

#### **International Documents**

- 3.3 There are only a few relevant international policies, however these are extremely important. The Kyoto Protocol is an international agreement to reduce and stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere to a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. The Aarhus Convention Agreement aims to “*Contribute to the protection of the right of every person of present and future generations to live in an environment adequate to his or her health and well-being*” by implementing access to information, public participation in decision making and access to justice. Finally, the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development aims to eradicate poverty across the globe and commits countries to sustainable development.

#### **European Documents**

- 3.4 A key European policy document is ‘*Environment 2010: Our Future, Our Choice*’, which emphasises that climate change is still an outstanding challenge for the next 10 years beyond. The document aims to protect, conserve and restore the natural flora and fauna, contribute to a high level of

quality of life and social well being for citizens by providing an environment where the level of pollution does not give rise to harmful effects on human health and the environment and by encouraging a sustainable urban development. It also aims to better resource efficiency and resource and waste management to bring about more sustainable production and consumption patterns, thereby decoupling the use of resources and the generation of waste from the rate of economic growth.

- 3.5 Other European policies include objectives to improve water environmental standards; promote sustainable use of water and to protect, enhance, restore and clean surface water and groundwater. In addition objectives to prevent further deterioration and to protect and enhance aquatic ecosystems are in place. Such an objective will be achieved by having regard to the water needs of such aquatic ecosystems, as well as terrestrial ecosystems and wetlands.
- 3.6 Other objectives aim to avoid concentrations of harmful air pollutants, prevent or reduce and limit values of air pollutants and / or alert thresholds set for ambient air pollution levels. The EU Habitats Directive aims to protect species of wildlife and to conserve natural habitats and the habitats of specific species, whilst the EU Birds Directive aims to take measures to conserve all naturally occurring bird species across the EU, to classify as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) the most suitable territories for specific species and to maintain SPAs in favourable conservation status.

#### **National Documents**

- 3.7 Nationally, there are many relevant strategies and policies of relevance, some of which are informed by international and European policy. Examples of such include the UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy, the UK Energy and Air Quality Strategies. Other documents relate to topics such as biodiversity, urban and rural development, climate change, transport and waste. More specifically related to planning are the Planning Policy Guidance Notes and the new Planning Policy Statements. Relevant documents include PPS's 1, 6, 7, 10, 22,23 and PPG's 3, 4, 9, 13, 17, 21, 24 and 25.

### **Regional Documents**

- 3.8 At the regional level, Regional Planning Guidance for the North West (RPG13) is the current Regional Spatial Strategy, and as such is part of the statutory development plan. RSS is being reviewed at the current time. There are other strategies of relevance, such as the Regional Economic, Waste, Energy and Housing Strategies. Of particular importance is the '*Action for Sustainability*' (Afs) framework that has been set up at the regional level as a tool for incorporating sustainable solutions into plans and strategies. Other documents relate to sustainable development and 'The Northern Way', which aims to accelerate economic growth and encourage regeneration to bridge the gap with the south of England, which is currently more productive in comparison to the north.

### **County and Sub-Regional Documents**

- 3.9 There are various strategies produced by Lancashire County Council that are relevant, including the Lancashire Environment Strategy 2005-2010, the Environmental Action Strategy, The Lancashire Woodland Vision, Cultural Strategy, Local Agenda 21 Strategy, Waste Plan, Transport Plan, the Lancashire Landscape Strategy and the Lancashire Community Strategy 'Ambition Lancashire'. These documents are produced in addition to The Joint Lancashire Structure Plan, which was adopted in March 2005 and, as part of the statutory development plan, is an important material consideration.
- 3.10 The Local Biodiversity Action Plan for Lancashire, prepared by the Lancashire Wildlife Trust, is an on-going programme and a key consideration for the Skelmersdale Development Framework. Lancashire Economic Partnership is responsible for preparing the Sub-Regional Economic Action Plan, the Environment Agency is responsible for the River Douglas Catchment Flood Management Plan and the North and West Lancashire Learning Partnership are responsible for the document 'Identifying Barriers to Learning for Lone Parents in the West Lancashire Area'.

**Local Documents**

- 3.11 Locally, there are a number of strategies of significance, including those produced by West Lancashire District Council and the local Community Strategy prepared by the Local Strategic Partnership. The adopted Local Plan as part of the statutory development plan is a key consideration as is the emerging Replacement Local Plan. There is also Supplementary Planning Guidance for Skelmersdale Town Centre, produced by West Lancashire District Council in 2000, which has been incorporated into the Review.
  
- 3.12 Of the documents produced by the County Council, these include the Housing Strategy 2004-2009, the Cultural Strategy, the Play Strategy, the Community Safety Strategy, the Consultation and Community Safety Strategy, the Sustainability Action Plan, the Equality and Community Cohesion – Policy Statement and Strategy for Implementation and the Regeneration Strategy. The Physical Activity Strategy for the West Lancashire Community 2004 is also relevant and that is produced by a collaboration of organisations. The Natural Environment Action Plan produced by the West Lancashire Environment Network is also relevant.

**Wider Context Sustainability Objectives**

- 3.13 The review of the documents has identified a number of key social, economic and environmental objectives, some of which are specific to Skelmersdale. These are summarised in the table below.

**Table 1: Wider Context Social, Environmental and Economic Objectives**

<b>Social</b>	
Communities	Access to information
	Involve all sections of the community in the decision making process
	Access to justice
	Ensuring transparency, efficiency & accountability
	People shaping the future of their community, supported by strong and truly representative local leaders
	Promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion
	Provide equal access to facilities, goods, services and people
	Create neighbourhoods and communities which are valued by the people who live in them

	Support and develop the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sectors to deliver learning opportunities
Design	People living in attractive, well kept towns and cities which use space and buildings well
	Good design and planning which makes it practical to live in a more environmentally sustainable way, with less noise, pollution and traffic congestion
	Create urban environments that are attractive, clean and safe.
Leisure and Recreation	To provide opportunities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation near urban areas
	Creating local networks of high quality and well managed and maintained open spaces, sports and recreational facilities
	Rationalise play provision, in general moving away from maintaining small play sites in favour of improving larger facilities with better equipment and ancillary provision
	Proactively support development of sporting opportunities for people with physical and sensory impairment and from black and minority groups
	Ensure everyone can access the countryside
Culture and Tourism	Enhance cultural distinctiveness to create a vibrant and positive image
	Extend the public art programme to include creative approaches to streetscape improvement
	Enhance tourism
	Explore the potential of a new multi-cultural discipline venue in Skelmersdale town centre + explore the contribution that cultural facilities + opportunities could make to Skelmersdale town centre
	Integrate culture and sport within Skelmersdale Town Centre to deliver the sub-regional and regional significance of the location for future investment
Housing	Ensure that every home is adequately and affordably heated
	Plan to meet the housing requirements of the whole community, including those in need of affordable and special needs housing
	Provide wider housing opportunity and choice and a better mix in the size, type and location of housing than is currently available, and seek to create mixed communities
	Help to reduce problems of obsolete and unpopular housing
Health and Safety	Reduce road casualties
	Enable citizens to live without fear of crime and persecution
	Reduce fire safety crime and to promote fire safety awareness
	Reduce the incidences of litter, fly tipping and graffiti
	Include "Safety by Design" element in all environmental improvement schemes
	Provide diversionary activities and support that enables young people to contribute positively to the community
	Proactively tackle anti-social behaviour, particularly in underpasses
	Tackle the underlying causes of ill health by addressing issues of poverty, housing, employment and education

	Encourage healthy lifestyles and contribute to a high level of quality of life with equal access to health facilities for all and social well being for citizens
Education	To provide equal opportunities for all to access education, training and information
	A culture of lifelong learning that allows people to acquire new skills, knowledge and understanding
	Promote social inclusion by ensuring that basic needs for all Lancashire citizens are met more locally
	Improving basic and higher level skills and qualification levels
	Expand the role and impact of higher education
Accessibility	Promote accessibility to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling
	Provide people with more choice about how they travel
<b>Environmental</b>	
Water	Protect, enhance and restore surface and ground water
	Promote sustainable water use based on a long-term protection of available water resources
	Contribute to mitigating the effects of floods and droughts
	Reduce the risk of flooding and harm caused by floods to people, the natural, historic and built environment
	Maximise opportunities to work with natural processes and deliver multiple benefits from flood risk management
Climate Change	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions in an attempt to slow climate change
	Promote climate-friendly technologies
Pollution	Reduce pollution in water, air, soil
Habitats	Create a more ecologically diverse natural environment
	Conserve natural habitats and the habitats of species
	Protect, conserve and restore natural flora
	Promote the management and extension of woodland
Wildlife	Protect wildlife species
	Take measures to conserve all naturally occurring bird species
	Protect, conserve and restore natural fauna
Energy	Stimulate new, more efficient sources of power generation
	Promote better energy efficiency in respect of commercial and domestic buildings
	Deliver small-scale, biomass generated heating applications in buildings such as village halls, schools and rural farms and offices
Waste	Tackle the amount of waste produced, breaking the link between economic growth and increased waste
	Increase the rate of recycling
	Address waste as a resource and look to disposal as the last option
	Encourage communities to take more responsibility for their own waste, and enable sufficient and timely provision of waste management facilities to meet the needs of their communities
	Deal with waste as near to where it is produced as possible
Transport & Travel	Promote a transport system that makes less impact on the environment
	Reduce the need to travel, especially by car

Natural Resources	Promote wiser, sustainable use of natural resources
Noise	Wherever practicable separate noise sensitive developments from sources of noise
Landscapes	Retain attractive landscapes, and enhance landscapes, near to where people live
Built Environment	Improve damaged and derelict land around towns
	Protect all aspects of the historic environment
	Improve the urban environment through appropriate derelict land reclamation focusing on brownfield sites, reuse of redundant buildings and provision of urban green space.
	Enhance the visual amenity of the built environment
	Create green spaces in urban areas that perform vital functions as areas for nature conservation and biodiversity and by acting as 'green lungs' assist in meeting objectives to improve air quality
<b>Economic</b>	
Growth	Define the main investment priorities to enable economic growth and links with global markets, better transport within and between each city region and investment in leadership capacity which are of particular importance
	Exploit the growth potential of business sectors
	Improve the competitiveness and productivity of businesses
	Improve the productivity of the service sector
	Stimulate enterprise growth
	Improve the quality of the visitor economy
	Build the knowledge economy
	Help to deliver a higher value added, higher wage economy
	Accelerate the transition to higher value added advanced manufacturing
	Develop cultural activity that makes a greater contribution to the economy
Infrastructure	Develop the strategic transport, communications and economic infrastructure
	Develop regionally significant, high quality sites and premises for businesses
	Improve accessibility, to ensure that existing or new development is, or will be, accessible and well served by a choice of means of transport.
Diversity	Ensure the availability of a balanced portfolio of employment sites
	Promote more opportunities for work for all sections of the community in a diverse economy
	Meet the demand for office accommodation in order to achieve a greater economic mix with manufacturing and distribution
	Support efficient, competitive and innovative retail, leisure, tourism and other sectors, with improving productivity
Education	Increase the number of employees with higher-level skills
Linkages	Improve intra- and inter- sub-regional connectivity
Investment	Encourage inward investment into the town centre
Equality	Equal recognition and treatment of all people in all employment policies and practices
	Secure economic inclusion

- 3.14 These wider context sustainability objectives will be used, together with the baseline issues identified in the next section, to form more specific, focused sustainability objectives for the Skelmersdale Development Framework and Sustainability Appraisal to address.

## 4.0 BASELINE INFORMATION AND ISSUES

- 4.1 The baseline report for the Skelmersdale Vision has provided considerable information on the issues facing the town today, particularly economic and social issues. For this scoping report, further research has been carried out, particularly on environmental issues.
- 4.2 The baseline information identified in this section will be used to highlight the sustainability problems affecting Skelmersdale and as the basis for identifying alternative ways of dealing with these. It will also be used for predicting and monitoring the effects of the Vision. **Table 2** (below) shows the quantifiable baseline data specific to Skelmersdale, **Table 3** (below) shows more general baseline data relating to West Lancashire District. The following sections describe the qualitative baseline data.

### Environment

#### *Natural Environment*

- 4.3 The series of figures at **Appendix 3** highlight the environmental locational characteristics of Skelmersdale within the regional context. These maps show that Skelmersdale is surrounded by high-grade agricultural land; grade 1 to the west and south and grade 3 to the north and east. There are also many wooded areas and trees around the town, the most notable of which is Beacon Park. The area north-east of the town is identified as an ancient and semi-natural woodland. There are no Woodland Trust Sites near to Skelmersdale however.
- 4.4 There are no Special Areas of Conservation near to Skelmersdale nor are there any areas within the region which are classified as Nitrate Sensitive.

#### *Landscape Character*

- 4.5 Skelmersdale is situated within Character Area 32 *Lancashire and Amonderness Plain* of the Countryside Agency's countryside character map for the North West (Countryside Agency 1998). The southern part of the plain is characterised by lush pasture and arable fields on relatively flat to gently rolling plain. Key issues for this area are:

- The retention and appropriate management of hedgerows
- The conservation of lowland mosses
- The conservation and management of field ponds
- The retention of contrasting landscape types within the area.

4.6 The Lancashire Landscape Strategy prepared by Lancashire County Council provides further detail on landscape character. Skelmersdale town is shown as a suburban landscape, which includes a variety of post 1930s architectural styles and layouts. The strategy identifies the value of 'encapsulated' areas of countryside and other areas of informal open land, which provide important wildlife habitats and recreational space for local residents. It proposes the enhancement of green corridors, which allow the movement of wildlife between urban areas and the surrounding countryside.

4.7 It is also important to understand the character of the surrounding area. The Lancashire Landscape Strategy shows three neighbouring landscape character areas:

- i. Upholland Ridge (Area 7b) to the north, which is an intensively farmed but wooded gritstone ridge. Issues here are the increasing size of fields and loss of hedgerows and also the recreational value and demands afforded by the views.
- ii. Skelmersdale Mosses (Area 16d) to the south, is an area of reclaimed mossland, largely reclaimed for intensive arable farming. The area is heavily influenced by new development.
- iii. Omskirk-Lathom-Rufford (Area 15a) to the west, which is undulating lowland farmland.

4.8 Skelmersdale has an abundance of green spaces. The River Tawd and its feeders have shaped the landscape, producing serpentine valleys and cloughs that scythe through the town. Parkland and grassland stretch down to the river from the town centre and residential areas. This open space network links directly to the countryside to the north, east and south from the town centre. The green corridors undoubtedly provide wildlife with a safe

haven and an opportunity for the community to interact with it. The following types of landscape elements are present within the town:

- Cloughs and river valleys
- Native structure planting
- Climax woodland
- Rough grassland
- Informal parkland
- Formal parks
- Civic squares
- Recreation, play and sports grounds
- Road corridors

4.9 Much of these landscapes suffer from a lack of management of the woodland, planting and watercourses, with consequent impacts on ecology. In addition the extensive areas of open parkland are underused.

4.10 Tawd Valley is a particularly important area, not only has it received a nature conservation designation in the Local Plan but it is also designated as 'green space' and for 'informal recreational facilities'.

#### *Biodiversity*

4.11 There are no important bird areas within the vicinity of the town, the nearest being around the Mersey estuary and the coastal area around Southport. There are no National or Local Nature reserves nearby either. The presence of other species, particularly protected species, close to the town centre is unknown at this stage.

#### *Flood Risk*

4.12 In respect of flood risk, the Environment Agency map identifies the extent of an extreme flood, which demonstrates little penetration into the town centre with little impact on the built structures.

*Built Environment*

- 4.13 Although Skelmersdale was a 'New Town' and most development occurred in the second half of the last century, there are various features of historical interest if not significance, relating to its pre and early industrial past.
- 4.14 '*The Landscape History of West Lancashire*' was prepared for the District Council in 1993. It finds a surprising number of pre-urban and pre-industrial buildings have survived. It also reports that in the Tawd Valley and Beacon Parks some stretches of medieval field boundaries with their banks, ditches and hedgerows, survive in recognisable form. The study suggests that there is an opportunity for further investigation of surviving evidence of the pre-urban and pre-industrial landscape within the present town with a view to possible interpretative exercises and projects.
- 4.15 The Lancashire Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) provides further information on historical features. An extract from the historic landscape characterisation plan shows Skelmersdale town centre as having two broad types of landscape (see Appendix 3):
- i. 'Modern recreation' area including Tawd Valley Park and the Concourse to the west, and
  - ii. 'Modern settlement' area including the residential areas of Birch Green and Tan House to the east.
- 4.16 There are various sites in and around the town centre that are recorded in the SMR (see Appendix 3). These are mainly sites of former quarries and coal pits. There are no Listed Buildings within the town centre itself although there are a number of Listed Buildings in the Elmers Green area to the east. There are no Scheduled Monuments or other features of historical interest.

*Pollution*

- 4.17 Pollution issues relevant to the town centre and the Development Framework are air quality, noise, water quality and contamination. Little data is available on such issues in addition to the information which is contained in Table 3 below.

## **Economic**

### *Business Economy*

- 4.18 West Lancashire's geographical position means that it is as greatly influenced by the economic situation within Greater Manchester and Merseyside as well as the economic situation in Lancashire.
- 4.19 West Lancashire has several advantages over other areas in attracting industry and business to the District. Part of the District is designated as a Development Area and Skelmersdale/Up Holland also has Objective 2 Area status. These designations mean that both European and National finance is available to assist businesses and create jobs within those areas. Much of the District is contained within the Liverpool Travel-To-Work Area (TTWA) with the exception of Hesketh Bank and Tarleton (Preston TTWA) and Parbold, Wrightington and Up Holland (Wigan/St. Helens TTWA). This is reflected in a net outflow of people in the journey of work pattern from West Lancashire to Merseyside.
- 4.20 On the outskirts of Skelmersdale are several industrial areas, West Pimbo, Gillibrands and Stanley. These areas are predominantly occupied by warehouse, distribution and industrial buildings. The Co-op has a substantial presence of offices within the town centre and are a major employer within the town. To the south of the town centre, beyond the M58 is White Moss which is a successful hi-tech campus style business park and offers further opportunities for B1 (office, research and development and light industrial) development.

### *Employment*

- 4.21 The unemployment situation in Skelmersdale has improved since the mid 1980's although some wards still have high unemployment rates in comparison to other wards in the District, with long-term unemployment being a particular problem. Large sections of Skelmersdale's labour force are poorly qualified and work in the manufacturing industry in semi-skilled and unskilled jobs.

- 4.22 Within the town itself, there are distinct disparities between wards in the town centre and wards elsewhere in the town, in terms of employment and wealth. Residents in the town centre tend to be relatively poorly qualified and less skilled and more likely to be employed in the manufacturing industry.

#### *Tourism*

- 4.23 At a local level West Lancashire is not a traditional holiday destination but it does contain a variety of tourism facilities. Being readily accessible from Merseyside and Greater Manchester it is an ideal location for day trips. It also benefits from its proximity to Southport, which caters for a large number of longer stay visits. People staying in Southport can be attracted to some of the facilities in West Lancashire.

#### *Retail*

- 4.24 Skelmersdale is designated as the 'Main Town' in West Lancashire's retail hierarchy, above both Ormskirk and Burcough, which are designated as 'Market Towns'. The relatively low wage economy together with low levels of home ownership has had a negative impact on retail investment in the town centre however, and much of the retail offer is of low-order and is discount orientated. The town centre is in desperate need of regeneration and is a priority of the District Council's, as set out in the Corporate Plan.

- 4.25 The urban environment of the town centre is generally of poor physical appearance and this gives an unwelcome feel to the centre. The town centre is focused on the inward-looking Concourse shopping centre with other developments, including Asda, giving the feel of a retail park. Civic spaces are also under maintained and bland. There is a lack of cohesive urban design. The Concourse and Asda site are the major usable, public spaces within the centre but both are privately owned and this compounds the notion that no vibrant public realm exists.

### **Social**

#### *Housing*

- 4.26 The Housing Needs Study Update, prepared in August 2003, shows that there is a significant affordability problem in West Lancashire, especially in the rural areas. The Community Strategy identified the need to ensure

people can access a variety of affordable housing as a key priority and this is also a priority of the Council's Corporate Plan. One of the objectives of West Lancashire's Housing Strategy is to balance the housing market in the District.

- 4.27 The Housing Needs Study Update, recommended that the overall District target for affordable housing, should be 25% of the total of all units negotiated on all suitable sites. In Skelmersdale existing supply and lower house prices may mean that targets could be lower, to take account of supply and units arising from regeneration schemes.

*Leisure, Cultural and Recreation*

- 4.28 The Nye Bevan swimming pool is the only leisure facility in the town centre; the Ecumenical Centre provides community facilities. The Concourse shuts down by the evening and there are no restaurants, cafes, pubs, nor a cinema or social and community facilities or facilities for young people. This means that the town centre suffers from a lack of activity and vibrancy, particularly in the evening. The local community is very aware of this issue and it is one of the key concerns they would like to see addressed.
- 4.29 An issue that became apparent during the consultation exercise was the general lack of equipped play facilities for young children. This was raised as an issue despite the new play area to the north of the centre.
- 4.30 In respect of outdoor recreational facilities, Beacon Country Park is the District's major countryside recreation facility and is located immediately to the east of Skelmersdale. Tawd Valley Park, is the wooded valley of the River Tawd where it runs through Skelmersdale. It has been used to create a linear park which is accessible to many residential areas. The form of the Park is dictated by the river and the natural landscape, which is largely undisturbed except for the creation of footpaths. It has the potential to provide a range of facilities for informal recreation.

*Crime*

- 4.31 The highest priority of West Lancashire's Community Strategy is to take action against crime and the fear of crime. The Community Safety Strategy aims to develop creative and purposeful diversionary activities for young

people. It is therefore important that sports, recreational, open space, leisure and cultural facilities are retained and improved so that they can be used by local people, especially young people. Public consultation with the local community has highlighted that the community's perceptions of personal safety are poor, particularly with the centre shut down in the evenings and the isolation of the many footpaths around the town.

#### *Health*

- 4.32 The Primary Care Trust has recently opened a drop-in health care facility in the Concourse, which has proved popular with residents. However, despite this access to health care facilities, particularly hospitals, is still a major sustainability issue for Skelmersdale. This problem is worsened by the low car ownership and lack of public transport to healthcare facilities.

#### *Accessibility*

- 4.33 Skelmersdale is easily accessible by road but, other than frequent day-time bus services to and from Wigan and Ormskirk, overall there is poor public transport provision from surrounding areas, particularly to key employment destinations and origins and healthcare facilities (as described above).
- 4.34 There is no rail station within the town, although there are long-term proposals to construct a spur from the Kirkby-Rochdale rail line into Skelmersdale from West Pimbo to service industrial estates for freight and there could be potential to extend the line to the town centre for passenger services. The present railway station at Pimbo Lane, Up Holland, is under-used; being remote from the main centres of population at Skelmersdale and Up Holland and not connected to a frequent bus service.
- 4.35 Internally, the town's transport infrastructure is characterised by a dominant road network including large roundabouts that sever the town. Footways and cycle tracks are segregated from the roads; they cross the roads using subways and footbridges and are poorly signed, maintained and underused.

#### *Image*

- 4.36 An issue that crosses economic, social and environmental concerns is Skelmersdale's image to the outside world. Consultation has revealed that

the community feel the town is perceived as a 'cultural wasteland' with downmarket shopping and an overall negative image.

**Table 2: Skelmersdale Specific Baseline Data**

<b>SA Objective</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Quantifiable Data</b>	<b>Data Source</b>	<b>Thresholds / Targets / Comparable Data</b>	<b>Trends / Assessment</b>
Population	Population	24,000 Town Centre	2001 Census	22% of West Lancashire Population	
		52,500 Skelmersdale		Just over half population of West Lancashire	
	Demographic Profile	High proportion of people under 14 in town centre (23%).	2001 Census	19% in West Lancashire	
		High proportion of people between 15-30 in town centre (18%).		19% in Lancashire	
Low proportion of people over 60 in town centre (17%).	16% in West Lancashire				
			17% in Lancashire		
			21% in West Lancashire		
			22% in Lancashire		
Human Health	Number Describing Health as Not Good	12% Town Centre	2001 Census	10% in West Lancashire	
		11% Skelmersdale		10% in Lancashire	
Employment	Population Unemployed	1.34%	Skelmersdale figure from Census 2001	2.7% West Lancashire	
			West Lancashire and Lancashire figure from Lancashire County Council, February 2006	2.1% Lancashire	

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<b>SA Objective</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Quantifiable Data</b>	<b>Data Source</b>	<b>Thresholds / Targets / Comparable Data</b>	<b>Trends / Assessment</b>
Social	Proportion of People in Socio-Economic Group AB	10% Town centre	2001 Census	21% Lancashire	
		19% Skelmersdale		22% West Lancashire	
	Proportion of People in Socio-Economic Group C1	21% Town centre		29% Lancashire	
		25% Skelmersdale		28% West Lancashire	
	Proportion of People in Socio-Economic Group C2	18% Town centre		16% Lancashire	
		16% Skelmersdale		15% West Lancashire	
Proportion of People in Socio-Economic Group D	32% Town centre	19% Lancashire			
	24% Skelmersdale	19% West Lancashire			
Education	Proportion of people with no qualifications	19% Town centre	2001 Census	16% Lancashire	
		16% Skelmersdale		16% West Lancashire	
	Proportion of people with Level 1 Qualifications	41% Town centre		30% Lancashire	
		37% Skelmersdale		30% West Lancashire	
	Proportion of people with Level 2 Qualifications	20% Town centre		17% Lancashire	
		20% Skelmersdale		17% West Lancashire	
Proportion of people with Level 3 Qualifications	19% Town centre	20% Lancashire			
	21% Skelmersdale	20% West Lancashire			
Proportion of people with Level 4/5 Qualifications	6% Town centre	8% Lancashire			
	7% Skelmersdale	8% West Lancashire			
Proportion of people with Level 4/5 Qualifications	8% Town centre	18% Lancashire			
	16% Skelmersdale	18% West Lancashire			

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<b>SA Objective</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Quantifiable Data</b>	<b>Data Source</b>	<b>Thresholds / Targets / Comparable Data</b>	<b>Trends / Assessment</b>		
Car Ownership	Proportion of People with no car	40% Town centre	2001 Census	25% Lancashire			
		28% Skelmersdale		21% West Lancashire			
	Proportion of People with 1 car	44% Town centre		45% Lancashire			
		43% Skelmersdale		43% West Lancashire			
	Proportion of People with 2 cars	13% Town centre		24% Lancashire			
		23% Skelmersdale		28% West Lancashire			
Proportion of People with 3 cars	2% Town centre	4% Lancashire					
	5% Skelmersdale	6% West Lancashire					
Retail	Vacancy Levels	1% Town centre	West Lancashire Annual Monitoring Report Joint Structure Plan Monitoring Report 8  Goad	1% Lancashire	Change 2001-2005 +470sqm +7%  2002 32.45% Properties, 30.19% Floor space (8642sqm) (Goad)		
		1% Skelmersdale		2% West Lancashire			
	Multiple Outlets	30.3% Properties		Goad 2002		34.10% National Average	
	Comparison Outlets	7,330sqm Floorspace					48.01% national Average
		59 Properties (39.07%)					53.09% national Average
Convenience Outlets	25 Properties (16.56%)	9.20% national Average					
	7,250sqm Floorspace (25.32%)	16.91% national Average					

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SA Objective	Indicator	Quantifiable Data	Data Source	Thresholds / Targets / Comparable Data	Trends / Assessment
	Service Outlets	25 Properties (16.56%)  2,970sqm Floorspace (10.39%)		31.14% national Average  20.77% national Average	
	Total Town Centre Units (Use Class A)	151 Properties  28,622sqm			
Leisure & Culture	Number of Facilities	1 – Nye Bevan Swimming Pool			
Natural Environment	Groundwater	Probably at significant risk of failing objectives	EA		
	SSSI's	None within town boundary	Local Authority		
	Areas of Landscape History within town centre boundary (as defined on proposals map)	1 - Tawd Valley (Local Importance)	Local Authority		
	Designated Nature Conservation Sites within town centre boundary (as defined on proposals map)	4 - Tawd Valley (between Concourse and College), green strip to east of Concourse and north of Co-op offices, green wedge (Skelmersdale Hall and Westhead Cloughs) to north of Concourse to east of the Northway., Delph Clough to south east of Co-op offices.	Local Authority		

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<b>SA Objective</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Quantifiable Data</b>	<b>Data Source</b>	<b>Thresholds / Targets / Comparable Data</b>	<b>Trends / Assessment</b>
	Landscape Character of town centre (as defined on proposals map)	Modern Recreation	Lancashire County Council	Character surrounding town centre and town - Modern Settlement, Modern Recreation, Ancient Enclosure, Post-Medieval Enclosure, Modern Enclosure, Ancient and Post-Medieval Settlement, Modern Communications, Modern Industry	
Built Environment	Listed Buildings within town centre boundary (as defined on proposals map)	None	West Lancs. DC	Concentration of Listed Buildings in Elmers Green to east of town centre, mainly comprising former farmhouses.	
	Conservation Areas within town centre boundary (as defined on proposals map)	None	West Lancs. DC		
	Scheduled Monuments within town centre boundary (as defined on proposals map)	None	West Lancs. DC		
Recreation Space	Protected Green Space within town centre boundary (as defined on proposals map)	1 – to west of Firbank Road	West Lancs. DC		

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SA Objective	Indicator	Quantifiable Data	Data Source	Thresholds / Targets / Comparable Data	Trends / Assessment
	Protected Amenity Open Space and Recreational Facilities within town centre boundary (as defined on proposals map)	1 – to west of Firbank Road	West Lancs. DC		
	Allocated Informal Recreation Facilities	None within town centre, but one along Tawd Valley to north East and one to east of town at Beacon Park.	West Lancs. DC		
Environment	Number of Landfill Sites	12 within a five mile radius of Skelmersdale	Guardian		

**Table 3: West Lancashire District Based Baseline Data**

<b>SA Objective</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Quantifiable Data</b>	<b>Data Source</b>	<b>Thresholds / Targets / Comparable Data</b>	<b>Trends / Assessment</b>
Economy	GVA per capita in disadvantaged areas (£ per head – current basic prices)	14,890	Office for National Statistics	Lancashire: 12,705  North West (2002): 13,599	Above UK and Lancashire averages
	% Population living in workless households	-	Office for National Statistics	16% North West  16% UK	-
	% of children living in low-income households	21.3%	Audit Commission (2004)	18.27% national average (2004)	Above national average
	% of jobseeker's allowance claimants who have been unemployed for more than one year	14.3%	Audit Commission (2005)	11.15% national average (2005)	Above national average
	Number of jobseekers allowance claimants	2.5%	Learning and Skills Council for Lancashire (2005)	2.1% Lancashire (2005)  2.4% England (2005)	Above national and Lancashire averages
	Number of people claiming employment related benefits	1,509 or 2.3% of the total working age population	Office for National Statistics; Learning and Skills Council for Lancashire (2005)	2.1% Lancashire (2005)  2.4% England (2005)	Above Lancashire average / below national average
	% of the population that is economically inactive	21%	Nomis (Source: annual population survey (Apr 2004-Mar 2005))	21.7% Great Britain	Slightly below average.
	Gross Weekly Earnings (Full-Time Male)	£460	Nomis (Source: annual survey of hours and earnings - resident analysis (2005))	North West: £450  Great Britain: £475	Above regional, below national earnings

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SA Objective	Indicator	Quantifiable Data	Data Source	Thresholds / Targets / Comparable Data	Trends / Assessment
	Gross Weekly Earnings (Full-Time Female)	£362	Nomis (Source: annual survey of hours and earnings - resident analysis (2005))	North West: £352 Great Britain: £372	Above regional, below national earnings
Education	% of adults with NVQ level 3 or above	26.2%	Learning and Skills Council for Lancashire (2005)	24.2% Lancashire (2005)	Above Lancashire average
	% of people educated at degree level or higher	18.3%	2001 Census	19.8% England and Wales	Below national average
	% of people with GCSE grades A*-C	52.7%	DfES via Learning and Skills Council for Lancashire (2003)	51.8% Lancashire 52.9% England	Above Lancashire average / below national average
	% of people with no qualifications	18.2%	Nomis (Local area labour force survey (Mar 2003-Feb 2004))	15.1% Great Britain	Below national average
Business	Number of Company Registrations	8.1%	Nomis (Source: vat registrations/deregistrations by industry (2004))	North West 10.2% Great Britain 10.1%	Start-ups exceed the number of de-registrations
	Number of companies de-registering	9.1%	Nomis (Source: vat registrations/deregistrations by industry (2004))	North West 9.8% Great Britain 9.9%	Start-ups exceed the number of de-registrations
	Land take-up for employment purposes	4.69ha	West Lancashire Employment Land Monitor (2005)	2003/4: 28.32ha 2002/3: 12.62ha 2001/2: 5.80ha	Employment land take-up slowing down
Employment Land	Availability of employment land	66.83ha	West Lancashire Employment Land Monitor (2005)	2004: 71.89ha	Level of available employment land has decreased
	Proportion of new housing built within 1km of 5 basic services	28% of planning permissions 46% of completions	West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan; West Lancashire Housing Land Supply (2005)	Target within the Replacement Local Plan: 73%	Target not achieved

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SA Objective	Indicator	Quantifiable Data	Data Source	Thresholds / Targets / Comparable Data	Trends / Assessment
Access to Services	Proportion of new housing granted consent and completed within 400m of an existing / proposed bus stop or within 800m of an existing / proposed railway station	88% of dwellings granted permission / completed	West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan	Target within the Replacement Local Plan: 90%	Target not achieved
	Satisfaction with West Lancashire as a place to live (residents)	88% of people surveyed	West Lancashire People's Panel (2003)	No comparison available	No trend available
Place Image	Affordable housing completions	15 units	West Lancashire District Annual Monitoring Report 2004/05	-	None within the target areas of Ormskirk, Aughton and Burscough
Housing	Proportion of new dwellings at a density of above 50 dwellings per ha	40 dwellings or 9.6% of total 2004/05 completions	West Lancashire Housing Land Supply (2005)	-	Most development at a density of less than 30 dwellings per hectare (80%)
	Average house price	£158,903 (1 <sup>st</sup> Quarter 2005)	West Lancashire Housing Market Survey (2005); Housing Register	Lancashire: £123,777 North West: £132,015	Above both national and regional averages
Crime	Recorded crime per 1,000 people – violence against the person	13.3 per 1,000 or 1,450 offences	Lancashire County Council 'County Profile 2005'; West Lancashire Annual Monitoring Report	Lancashire: 22.1 per 1,000 North West: 21.1 per 1,000	Below the regional averages despite a 187% increase since 2001
	Recorded crime per 1,000 people – burglary of dwellings	3 per 1,000 or 327 offences	Lancashire County Council 'County Profile 2005'; West Lancashire Annual Monitoring Report	Lancashire: 4.7 per 1,000 North West: 7.4 per 1,000	Below the regional averages; decreased by 45% since 2001
	Recorded crime per 1,000 people – theft of a motor vehicle	3.4 per 1,000 or 376 offences	Lancashire County Council 'County Profile 2005'; West Lancashire Annual Monitoring Report	Lancashire: 3.2 per 1,000 North West: 5.5 per 1,000	Above the sub-regional average / below the regional average; decreased by 35% since 2001

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SA Objective	Indicator	Quantifiable Data	Data Source	Thresholds / Targets / Comparable Data	Trends / Assessment
	Recorded crime per 1,000 people – theft from a motor vehicle	6 per 1,000 or 659 offences	Lancashire County Council 'County Profile 2005'; West Lancashire Annual Monitoring Report	Lancashire: 7.6 per 1,000 North West: 9.8 per 1,000	Below the regional averages; decreased by 24% since 2001
	Recorded crime per 1,000 people – sexual offences	0.6 per 1,000 or 69 offences	Lancashire County Council 'County Profile 2005'; West Lancashire Annual Monitoring Report	Lancashire: 1.1 per 1,000 North West: 1.1 per 1,000	Below the regional averages despite a 44% increase since 2001
	Recorded crime per 1,000 people – robbery offences	0.3 per 1,000 or 34 offences	Lancashire County Council 'County Profile 2005'; West Lancashire Annual Monitoring Report	Lancashire: 0.8 per 1,000 North West: 1.7 per 1,000	Below the regional averages; decreased by 51% since 2001
Travel & Transport	% of people in employment's usual method of travel to work – car	59.3%	2001 Census	59.4% Lancashire 58.4% North West 55.2% England and Wales	Reflective of the sub-regional average / above the national and regional averages
	% of people in employment's usual method of travel to work – walking	11%	2001 Census	11.5% Lancashire 10.3% North West 10% England and Wales	Above the national and regional averages / below the sub-regional average
	% of people in employment's usual method of travel to work – cycling	3%	2001 Census	2.4% Lancashire 2.3% North West 2.8% England and Wales	Above the national, regional and sub-regional averages
	% of people in employment's usual method of travel to work – bus	6.1%	2001 Census	6.3% Lancashire 8.6% North West 7.4% England and Wales	Below the national, regional and sub-regional averages
	% of people in employment's usual method of travel to work – train	1.2%	2001 Census	1% Lancashire 1.9% North West 4.1% England and Wales	Above the sub-regional average / below the national and regional averages
	Average distance travelled to a fixed place of work	14.64km	2001 Census	Lancashire: 12.93km North West: 12.46km UK: 13.31km	Above the national, regional and sub-regional averages

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SA Objective	Indicator	Quantifiable Data	Data Source	Thresholds / Targets / Comparable Data	Trends / Assessment
	% of people working mainly at or from home	9.2%	2001 Census	9% Lancashire 8.4% North West 9.2% England and Wales	Reflective of the national average / above the regional and sub-regional averages
Health	Male life expectancy at birth	75.8 years	Office of National Statistics (2001- 2003)	North West 74.8 England and Wales 76.1	Above the regional average and below the national average
	Female life expectancy at birth	79.4 years	Office of National Statistics (2001- 2003)	North West 79.5 England and Wales 80.7	Below the national average
	Infant Mortality Rate: deaths up to 1yr per 1,000 births	4.4 per 1,000	Audit Commission (2003)	National average: 4.88 per 1,000	Below the national average
	% of population in 'good' health	69.06%	2001 Census	66.88% North West 68.55% England and Wales	Above both the national and regional averages
	% of people with limiting long-term illness	19.81%	2001 Census	20.72% North West 18.23% England and Wales	Above national average / below regional average
	% of households with one or more persons with a limiting long-term illness	37.67%	2001 Census	38.37% North West 34.05% England and Wales	Above national average / below regional average
Waterways	Proportion of total river length of good to fair chemical quality	17.66%	Environment Agency; Audit Commission	-	-
	Daily domestic use of the water supply	148 litres	Audit Commission (2004)	National average: 154.14 litres	Below the national average.
Natural Resources	Average annual consumption of gas	22526 Kwh	Audit Commission (2003)	National average: 20126 Kwh	Above the national average
	Average annual consumption of electricity	4665 Kwh	Audit Commission (2003)	National average: 4734 Kwh	Below the national average

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SA Objective	Indicator	Quantifiable Data	Data Source	Thresholds / Targets / Comparable Data	Trends / Assessment
Air Pollution	Carbon monoxide	Each below 10mg/m3	Emissions not monitored by the District within the authority, instead use readings in Blackpool, Preston and Bolton  West Lancs DC	UK Maximum daily running 8-hour mean to be achieved by 31 December 2003	
	Benzene	Emissions below 5µg/m3	Readings taken from Leeds and Liverpool.  West Lancs DC	UK annual mean Objective to be achieved by 31 December 2010	
	1,3-Butadiene	Emissions below 2.25µg/m3	Readings taken from Leeds and Liverpool  West Lancs DC	UK Running annual mean Objective to be achieved by 31 December 2003	
	Lead	Emissions not monitored locally	West Lancs DC	Expected to be below 0.25µg/m3 - UK Annual mean Objective to be achieved by 31 December 2008	
	Nitrogen dioxide	Each below 40µg/m3	Emissions not monitored by the District within the authority, instead use readings in Blackpool, Preston and Bolton  West Lancs DC	EU Limit Value to be achieved by 31 December 2010)	

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SA Objective	Indicator	Quantifiable Data	Data Source	Thresholds / Targets / Comparable Data	Trends / Assessment
	Particulate	Each below 40µg/m <sup>3</sup>	Emissions not monitored by the District within the authority, instead use readings in Blackpool, Preston and Bolton  West Lancs DC	UK objective to be achieved by 31 December 2004	
	Sulphur dioxide	each below 350µg/m <sup>3</sup>	Emissions not monitored by the District within the authority, instead use readings in Blackpool, Preston and Bolton  West Lancs DC	UK Objective to be achieved by 31 December 2004	
	Air Quality Management Areas	None need to be declared	West Lancs DC		
	'Stage 3' Pollution Assessment Requirements	Two areas near to Skelmersdale, 1) M58 southwest of Skem and 2) A570 near J3 of M58	West Lancs DC		

### **Difficulties in Collecting Baseline Data**

- 4.37 Several difficulties were experienced in collecting data. These related to the lack of information at the local level, for example obtaining statistical data for Skelmersdale separate from data relating to West Lancashire as a whole. Another difficulty related to obtaining environmental information. There appears to be numerous documents relating to how sustainability is to be achieved, with little statistical data on actual levels. There was also very little data on past trends so it was difficult to analyse the findings to any great degree.

## 5.0 SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES AND OBJECTIVES

5.1 The identification of key sustainability objectives (Section 3) and issues (Section 4) facing Skelmersdale provides an opportunity to define more specific issues which the Development Framework can seek to address and to develop specific sustainability objectives for resolving these. These objectives will incorporate the Statements of Intent as defined within the Skelmersdale Vision.

### Issues

5.2 This section sets out those issues which have been determined to date and which the Development Framework is potentially capable of addressing. These will be updated as a result of further consultation as work on the Development Framework and sustainability appraisal progresses. The table below provides a summary of these key issues.

**Table 4: Skelmersdale's Sustainability Issues**

#### Environmental

- management of habitats and wildlife including Nature Conservation Sites and Areas of Landscape History within the town centre could be improved
- Parkland and recreational space underused
- Potential for flooding (risk unknown)
- Poor urban aesthetic and lack of cohesive design
- Diversity and integrity of landscapes
- Poor gateways to the town centre
- Concourse Centre inward looking
- Civic spaces within town centre bland and underused
- Transport infrastructure dominates town centre, whilst walking and cycling facilities are poor encouraging unsustainable methods of transport
- Poor image
- Lack of historical context / reference / local identity within town centre

#### Economic

- Daily outflow of large proportion of population to other areas for work
- Labour force poorly qualified
- Jobs in town predominantly in manufacturing industry and in semi-skilled and unskilled jobs
- High unemployment
- Few visitors to the town
- Retail offer of low order and discount orientated
- No evening economy
- Low wage economy
- Disparities between town centre and other areas

<p><b>Social</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little variety of affordable housing</li> <li>• Lack of leisure and cultural facilities</li> <li>• Lack of social and community facilities</li> <li>• Lack of vibrancy in centre, especially at night</li> <li>• Lack of quality equipped play facilities for children</li> <li>• Poor perception of personal safety</li> <li>• Little natural surveillance of many footpaths and areas in town centre, especially at night</li> <li>• Poor public transport provision in some areas and very limited service everywhere at night.</li> <li>• Lack of rail station within town centre</li> <li>• Lack of linkages to the existing rail station at Up-Holland</li> <li>• Poor age diversity of population within town centre</li> <li>• High proportion of people residing in town centre describing health as not good</li> <li>• Poor diversity of socio-economic groups</li> <li>• High proportion of people with no or few qualifications</li> <li>• High vacancy rate of town centre units</li> <li>• Poor mix of uses within town centre</li> </ul>
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**Objectives**

5.3 From these issues, sustainability objectives can be devised which aim to tackle these issues, as well as ensuring that general sustainability principles are followed. The objectives are a range of overarching and interacting environmental, economic and social objectives. The sustainability objectives for the Skelmersdale Development Framework are therefore shown in **Table 5**. The intention would be that the Skelmersdale Development Framework achieves all of these objectives at the same time, although in reality this would be unlikely and compromises would need to be made. The 23 objectives are shown in Table 5 below and **Appendix 4** also shows the sources of these objectives.

<p><b>Table 5: Sustainability Objectives</b></p>
<p><b>Environmental</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Protect and enhance biodiversity</li> <li>2. Protect and enhance the quality and distinctiveness of the landscape</li> <li>3. Improve air quality</li> <li>4. Maintain and improve the quality of ground and surface waters</li> <li>5. Ensure the prudent use of natural resources and the sustainable management of existing resources</li> <li>6. Minimise energy use, promote efficient energy use, and promote renewable energy</li> <li>7. Prepare for climate change</li> <li>8. Minimise development of previously undeveloped land</li> <li>9. Improve the visual quality of the urban environment, particularly housing areas</li> </ol>

and the town centre

10. Ensure the sustainable management of waste, minimise its production and increase re-use, recycling and recovery rates

**Economic**

11. Diversify and expand Skelmersdale town centre as a vibrant hub for the provision of shopping, cultural and leisure facilities
12. Create an evening economy in Skelmersdale town centre
13. Develop a prosperous and diverse local economy with more varied jobs for local people
14. Reduce disparities in income and access to jobs, housing and services
15. Improve accessibility to jobs and service by sustainable forms of transport

**Social**

16. Raise aspirations of young people and adults through educational attainment and life skills
17. Reduce crime, disorder and the fear of crime
18. Improve perceptions of Skelmersdale
19. Embrace cultural diversity and promote social cohesion
20. Promote active citizenship/participation in decision making
21. Promote a healthy community
22. Improve the supply of good quality, affordable and resource efficient housing
23. Improve access to, the quality of and use of basic goods, services and amenities

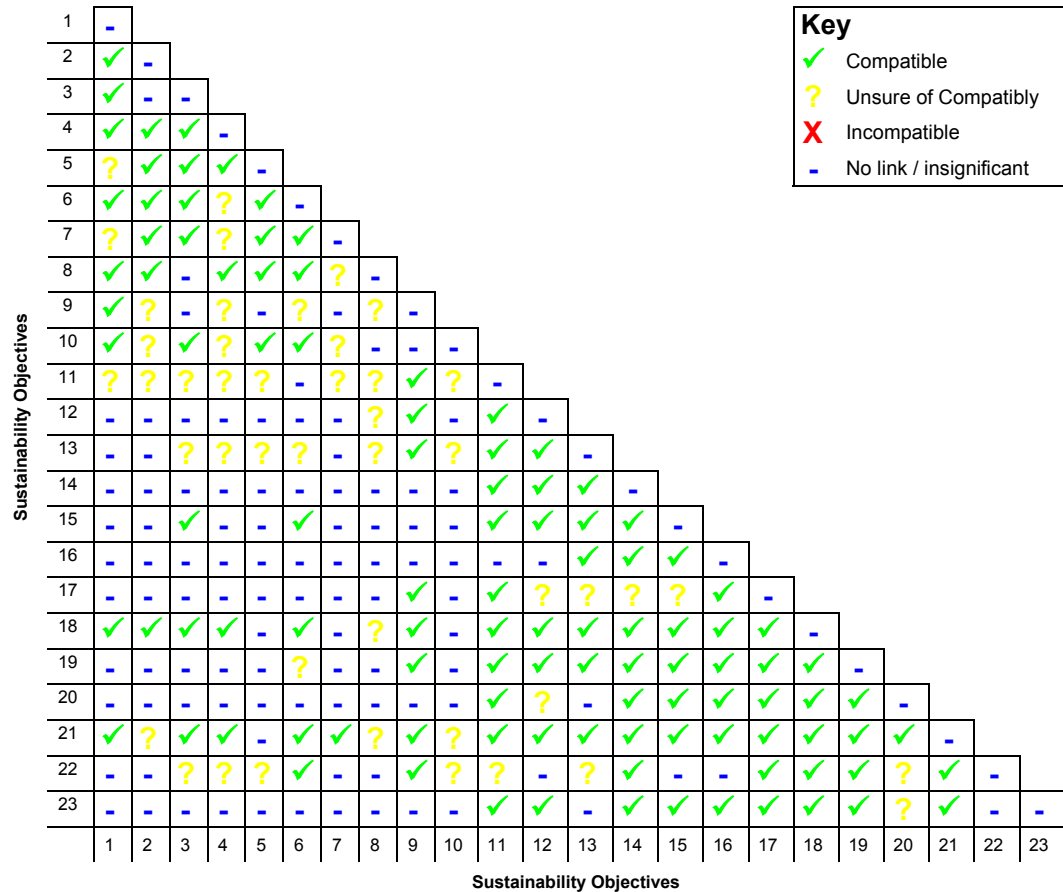
- 5.4 Before committing to these objectives, it is important to test whether the objectives are compatible with each other. The next section begins this assessment.

## 6.0 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL FRAMEWORK

### Compatibility of Sustainability Objectives

6.1 Prior to finalising and using the sustainability objectives to test the objectives of the Development Framework, it is important to assess the sustainability appraisal objectives against each other to identify areas of compatibility, inconsistency and uncertainties. The following matrix undertakes this assessment.

**Figure 1: Sustainability Objective Matrix**



6.2 In order to assist in understanding this matrix, the following table explains various scenarios identified as examples.

**Table 6: Example of matrix relationships**

Objectives	Relationship	Concerns highlighted
1 and 8	✓	Minimising development on previously undeveloped land will enable the protection and enhancement of biodiversity.
3 and 17	-	Improving air quality will not have any effect on the reduction of crime, disorder and fear of crime and vice versa.
6 and 13	?	Developing a diverse and local economy with more varied jobs may not necessarily minimise energy use. Although the new economic activity could use energy efficiently and could use renewable energy.

- 6.3 The matrix demonstrates that none of the sustainability objectives are incompatible, although there are numerous objectives which create uncertainties with regards to compatibility with other objectives and these could potentially be incompatible. The uncertainty regarding many of the objective pairings relate to the unknown scale or type of development / activity in respect of each situation. In some instances the objectives could be applied so that there is no conflict, in others they could be applied so that there is. For example, objectives 8 (minimise development of previously developed land) and 11 (diversify and expand Skelmersdale town centre as a vibrant hub for the provision of shopping, cultural and leisure facilities) could potentially be compatible and incompatible with each other, depending on whether the extension to the town centre took place over previously undeveloped land or not. The town centre could expand and diversify within its existing built-up boundary, or could extend over the adjacent green space.

#### **Testing the Vision Objectives**

- 6.4 The sustainability objectives will be used to assess the objectives of the Development Framework. To date, these have not been devised as work on the Development Framework, and the various development options, has not yet begun. However, as the Vision objectives will form the basis of the Development Framework objectives, this scoping report will undertake a preliminary assessment of the Vision objectives.

6.5 The Vision objectives are:-

- A. Re-connect the town centre and the community through the building of new roads and footpaths.
- B. Increase the number of residents in the town centre and diversify the style and range of residential accommodation available.
- C. Make Skelmersdale a retail, leisure and recreation centre of excellence within the Northwest.
- D. Ensure high quality design is key to creating a vibrant town centre.
- E. Ensure the parks and open space around the town centre are more accessible to Skelmersdale communities and visitors.

6.6 The matrix below assesses the sustainability objectives against the Vision objectives.

**Figure 2: Vision Objective Sustainability Appraisal**

Vision Objectives	A	X	X	?	X	?	?	-	X	?	-	✓	-	-	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	-	-	✓	-	✓	
	B	?	?	?	-	?	?	?	?	✓	?	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	✓	✓
	C	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	?	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	?	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	-	✓
	D	✓	✓	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	?	✓	-	✓
	E	✓	✓	?	?	✓	-	-	✓	✓	-	✓	?	-	-	-	-	?	✓	✓	✓	-	✓	-	✓
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
		Sustainability Objectives																							

Key			
✓	Consistent	X	Inconsistent
?	Unsure of consistency	-	No link / Insignificant

6.7 This initial assessment has highlighted that the majority of the Vision objectives are predominantly sustainable. The most potentially unsustainable objective is the construction of new roads and footpaths, although the degree to which these will be sustainable or otherwise will depend on their scale, their location and the impact on unsustainable travel patterns. For example, it

may be that improved footpaths will encourage people to walk or cycle, and that in addition more direct vehicular routes will enable more direct journeys by car to be made thus reducing mileage and therefore reducing emissions and the use of non-renewable resources.

- 6.8 The assessment has also highlighted that some sustainability objectives are not at present being specifically addressed by the Vision objectives, and therefore there is an opportunity for the Development Framework to ensure that these are more directly addressed. Examples of such include raising the aspirations of young people and adults through educational attainment and life skills and promoting active citizenship / participation in decision-making.

### **Sustainability Appraisal Framework**

- 6.9 In the next stage of the Sustainability Appraisal, two scenarios will be developed and then compared to see which is the most sustainable. The first scenario involves the production and implementation of the Development Framework; the second is the 'do nothing' scenario where the Development Framework is not produced.
- 6.10 The 'do nothing' scenario is developed and assessed in order to test the sustainability of Skelmersdale if the Development Framework was not produced and implemented. It does not presume that no change would occur, as it would be likely that some small-scale, sporadic development and investment would take place within the town over the same period within which the large-scale, comprehensive development, informed by the Development Framework, would take place.
- 6.11 The production of the Development Framework will involve the assessment of numerous options, such as whether to construct a new link road, relocate the bus station, develop a new supermarket, change the use of the Concourse building, create a leisure facility linking to the green spaces, and develop some of the green spaces, for example. Each option will be assessed individually against each of the sustainability objectives and for each option the likely effect on the existing baseline of Skelmersdale will need to be determined. Assessment will also include the cumulative impact of proposals. The resultant Development Framework scenario will therefore be a refined

choice of preferred, most sustainable options which can be compared to the sustainability and preferability of the 'do nothing' scenario.

- 6.12 The testing will take the form of an initial matrix assessment for compatibility, followed by more detailed testing by predicting the likely change which is likely to occur with reference to a set of indicators. This more detailed assessment framework, which includes the indicators to be used, is contained at **Appendix 5**. The assessment will identify whether effects are positive, negative or uncertain and whether such effects will arise in the short, medium or long term and be temporary or permanent.
- 6.13 The results from the appraisal process of the scenarios and options, combined with aspirations from the public and interested partners and commercial realism, will identify a preferred scenario and preferred options that will be carried forward in to the Development Framework.

### **Monitoring**

- 6.14 The SEA Directive states:

*“Member states shall monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of plans.....in order, inter alia, to identify at an early stage unforeseen adverse effects, and to be able to undertake appropriate remedial action” (Article 10.1)*

- 6.15 The significant sustainability effects of implementing the Skelmersdale Sustainability Appraisal must be monitored to identify any unforeseen adverse effects and to enable appropriate remedial action to be undertaken.
- 6.16 Sustainability Appraisal monitoring will allow the following questions to be answered:
- Were the assessment's predictions of sustainability effects accurate?
  - Is the framework contributing to the achievement of desired Sustainability Appraisal objectives and targets?
  - Are the mitigation measures performing as well as expected?

- Are there any adverse effects? Are these within acceptable limits, or is remedial action desirable?

## **7.0 CONSULTATION AND NEXT STEPS**

7.1 This document has identified the relevant plans, policies and strategies for the proposed Development Framework as well as identifying sustainability objectives with which it should comply. The document has also identified baseline characteristics of the area and identified issues that the Development Framework for the town centre should seek to address. From this baseline data and contextual review, a set of sustainability objectives has been identified and these will form the assessment criteria against which the Development Framework objectives will be assessed, once they have been devised. As work on the Development Framework has not yet begun, a preliminary assessment of the Vision objectives has been carried out in order to inform the basis of the Development Framework objectives. This initial assessment has identified that further objectives need to be incorporated into the Development Framework in order to ensure that it addresses all of the sustainability objectives.

7.2 The Development Framework will be worked up through a series of options, which will result in a preferred option being identified through a process of balancing aspirations, against sustainability objectives and commercial viability realism.

7.3 The results from the Sustainability Appraisal process will be set out in a preliminary or draft report, which will be available when the preferred option has been identified. Feedback from the preferred option and the draft sustainability report will then inform the production of the final Sustainability Appraisal report.

7.3 At this stage we would welcome your views on the baseline, sustainability issues and objectives. In addition to this general information the specific questions that we would wish to be addressed are:

1. Are there any other plans and programmes which influence the Development Framework / sustainability appraisal which we have not included in Appendix 1.

2. Do you have any facts and figures that you may have about Skelmersdale or the District which could help add to the baseline information?
  3. Are there any sustainability issues that we have not included in this document that you consider to be important?
  4. Do you agree with the sustainability objectives and indicators that have been identified? We would particularly welcome any suggestions on other indicators or targets which we could use.
  5. Alternative Options -are there options for the Development Framework that could be considered as part of the sustainability appraisal?
- 7.4 The results from this Scoping consultation will be incorporated into the next part of the Sustainability Appraisal process. The results from the consultation on the options will also be incorporated where relevant as it may identify new ideas and problems that need to be incorporated into the sustainability appraisal process.