

**West Lancashire District Council**  
**Local Development Framework**

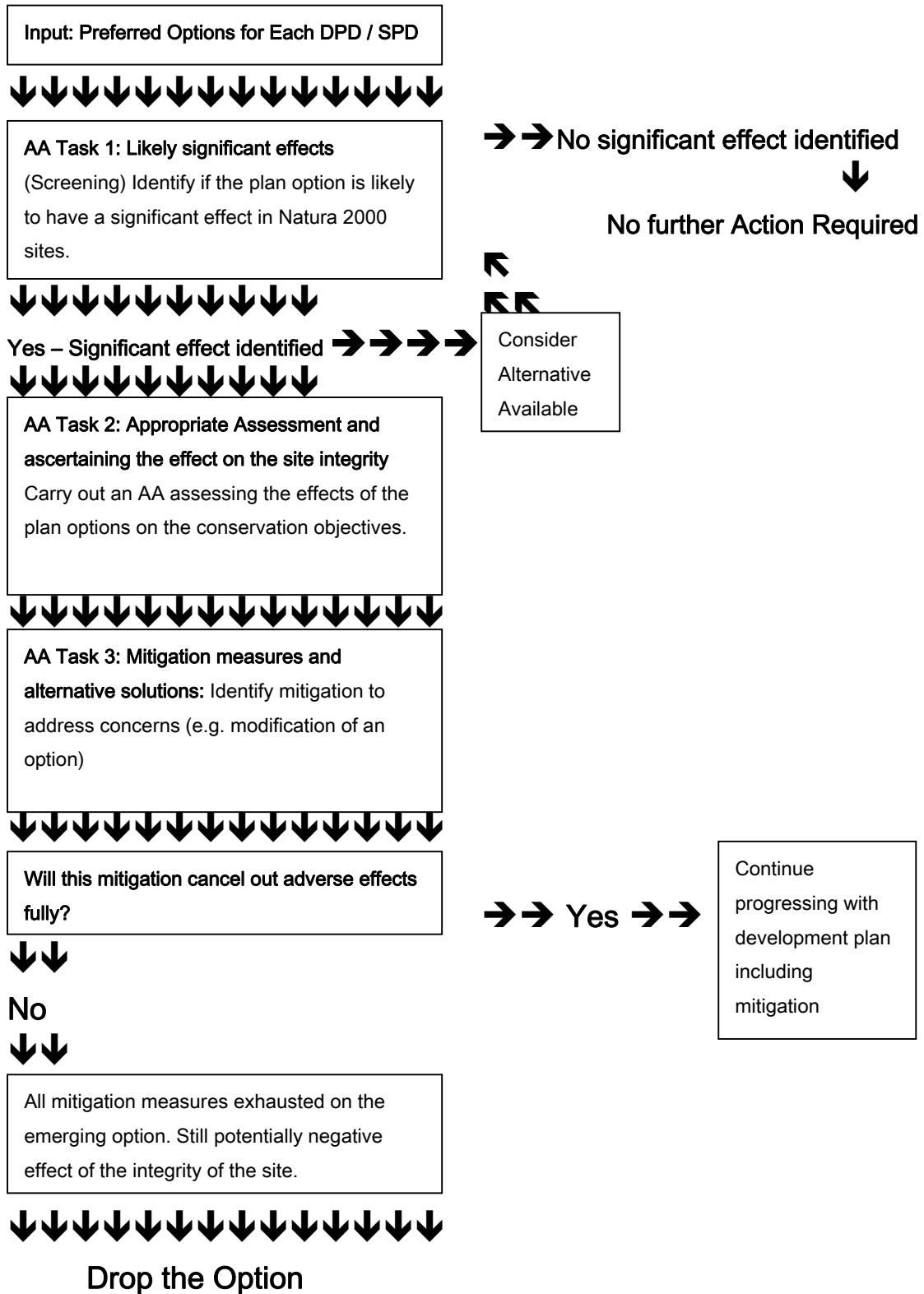
**Habitats Regulations Assessment for**  
**the Skelmersdale Town Centre**  
**Supplementary Planning Document**

September 2008

## **1. The purpose of the Habitat Regulations Assessment**

- 1.1 Under the Requirements of Article 6 of European Directive 92/43/EEC and Regulation 48 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1994, any plan or programme not directly connected with or necessary to the management of a European site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to an appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the sites conservation objectives.
- 1.2 The first stage of this process is to produce a screening opinion for the project or plan which examines the likely effects, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects upon the European sites and consider whether it can objectively be concluded that these effects will not be significant and therefore an appropriate assessment is not required.
- 1.3 In accordance with these requirements this document has been produced to screen the West Lancashire Core Strategy and Site Allocations Development Plan Documents (DPDs) for likely impacts on European Sites within or adjoining the District in order to determine whether or not an Appropriate Assessment is required. This screening document follows European Commission guidance – “Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites: Methodological guidance on provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC” (2002).
- 1.4 As Figure 1 demonstrates the screening stage (Part 2 of this report) will determine if the potential impacts of either DPD are such that the document can be ‘screened out’ from the need for further assessment work (i.e. it will not have a significant negative impact on the Natura 2000 sites). Where a potentially adverse impact on any European sites is identified tasks 2 and 3 will need to be followed and a full Appropriate Assessment carried out. The outcomes of this assessment work will assist in choosing an appropriate option to take forward which will have no or at worst minimal impact on local European sites.
- 1.5 This report has been produced in partnership with Natural England and West Lancashire District Council.

This represents stage 1 in the AA process as shown below in Figure 1.



## **2. Purpose of the Skelmersdale Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document**

2.1 West Lancashire District Council has prepared a Draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on regeneration of Skelmersdale Town Centre as part of its new Local Development Framework (LDF).

2.2 This Supplementary Planning Document has been prepared by the District Council to set out the planning guidance in relation to the mixed-use redevelopment of Skelmersdale Town Centre and builds on guidance provided within Policy DE11 of the Replacement West Lancashire Local Plan 2001 - 2016. The SPD sets out a broad framework for the future regeneration of the town centre and will be a material consideration for the District Council when determining all future planning applications.

2.3 There are a number of key principles set out with the SPD which include:

1. To make Skelmersdale a leisure, recreational and retail centre of excellence within the North West;
2. Ensure that parks and open space in and around the town centre are integral to its regeneration and are more accessible to Skelmersdale's communities and visitors;
3. Reconnecting the town centre and the community through the building of new roads and footpaths;
4. Increase the number of residents within the town centre and diversify the style and range of residential accommodation available; and
5. Ensure high quality design will be key to creating a vibrant town centre.

2.4 The main thrust of the SPD / Masterplan is to develop a new high street linking the Concourse Centre and Asda and focus on the development of land allocated for town centre uses within Policy DE11 of the West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan 2001 – 2016, consisting of an area of XXha. This will include a variety of retail, leisure, office and residential uses. The town centre core will also include a range of new community facilities such as a library, sports centre and ecumenical centre. All new development will be built to the highest standard of design and will be a massive investment into the town. Surrounding this will be other new uses including residential housing, improvements to the wooded Cloughs in terms of both their environmental and recreational value. Road links and pedestrian / cycling facilities will be improved around the town centre area. The new uses within the town centre will create new jobs and training opportunities for local people.

2.5 The SPD provides planning guidance on various aspects of the regeneration project and includes a Masterplan which provides a framework for how the town centre might be developed. It identifies the key development principles of the project, including the mix and scale of different land-uses and how these fit together to create an

integrated, functional and vibrant town centre. It also deals with the important issue of urban design, through the preparation of an accompanying Design Code, and sets out how new travel links and pedestrian routes will make the town centre more accessible and create better connections with surrounding estates.

Figure 1 below shows Skelmersdale Town Centre prior to the Masterplan proposal.



Figure 2 below shows Skelmersdale Town Centre as set out within the SPD / Masterplan.



- 2.6 This SPD is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of any European Sites. The purpose of this report is to assess whether the Skelmersdale Town Centre SPD is likely to have a significant effect on a European Site.
- 2.7 Further information on the supplementary planning document can be viewed at [www.westlancsdc.gov.uk/skelmersdale](http://www.westlancsdc.gov.uk/skelmersdale).

### **3. Structure of this Report**

- 3.1 This report is split into two parts, part one providing a context for the Appropriate Assessment and part two comprising the assessment matrix. The earliest point at which an Appropriate Assessment can be undertaken (i.e. when there is sufficient detail available within the plan document) is at the preferred option stage (Regulation 17 for Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) and Regulation 26 for Development Plan Documents (DPDs)). As the documents in the LDF are staggered in their timescale each will reach the preferred option stage at different times. Whilst part one of this document will remain largely unchanged through each process, part two that details the assessment as and when they can be made will be continually updated.
- 3.2 This report has been compiled in accordance with the emerging guidance on Appropriate Assessment.

### **4. Natura 2000 Sites within West Lancashire**

- 4.1 There are two sites identified within the West Lancashire Authority area as being of European importance, these being Martin Mere Wetland Reserve and the Ribble Estuary, both are designated as Special Protection Areas (SPA's). There is a further Site of Special Area of Conservation located on the Sefton Coast, which, although outside the local authority area is within the adjacent authority of Sefton.
- 4.2 Figure 1 over the page highlights the geographical relationship between the SPD area in Skelmersdale Town Centre and the European sites, both within the authority area and adjoining authorities.



Figure 3: Location of Skelmersdale Town Centre in relation to the European sites.

## 5. Rationale behind Site Selection

- 5.1 The European Designated sites set out in figure 3 have been identified for a variety of different reasons in terms of why they need to assess the potential impact of development. This reasoning is set out below:
- 5.2 Martin Mere SPA: This site has been selected on the basis that it is within a relatively close proximity of the development site (10.5km). There are also issues relating to the nature of species protected on the site (i.e. birds) and the potential pathways (either through the flight of birds or through inland waterways) which could have indirect impact on the site.

- 5.3 Ribble Estuary SPA: This site has been selected on the basis that it is within a relatively close proximity of the development site (19.2km). There are also issues relating to the nature of species protected on the site (i.e. birds) and the potential for pathways (either through the flight of birds or through inland waterways) which could have in-direct impact on the site.
- 5.4 Sefton Coast SAC: This site has been selected on the basis that it is within a relatively close proximity of the development site (23.6km). There are also issues relating to the nature of species protected on the site (i.e. birds) and the potential for pathways (either through the flight of birds or through inland waterways) which could have in-direct impact on the site.
- 5.5 Dee Estuary SAC: This site has been selected on the basis that has the potential to be in-directly affected through a pathway (water abstraction).

## **6. Assessment of Natura 2000 sites**

- 6.1 Appendix A to this document sets out the site location and description of all European Designated sites to which this screening document refers to. Appendix B sets out the screening criteria used to assess whether any likely impacts will arise, either individually or cumulatively, to these designated sites.
- 6.2 A brief summary of the likely impacts are set out below and draws from information set out within Appendix B.
- 6.3 Martin Mere SPA: This site is the closest European site to the proposed development in Skelmersdale Town Centre (10.5km). But in terms of geographical distance it is not considered that the new town centre proposals will directly impact on Martin Mere SPA.
- 6.4 As this is the site within the closest proximity to the development site, the potential for impact by emissions is likely to be greatest in this location. The development itself proposes a range of residential and commercial premises, which in themselves will not create significant harmful emissions that would affect any of the screened sites. It is anticipated that emissions could be created through the construction period, although these strictly control through the planning and environmental health processes. It is concluded that no significant impact will result on the SPA through any emissions from the development site.
- 6.5 One of the primary reasons for Martin Mere's designation as a European site is the rich diversity of birds, which either inhabit the mere on a regular or seasonal basis. It is not considered that the proposal will directly result in the damage of habitat at the Mere. However, consideration should be given to the impact that new development at Skelmersdale town centre may have on the flight patterns of migrating birds. The proposal does not involve the development of any tall buildings (i.e. over five storeys

in height) nor does it propose the development of any large-scale turbines which are known to affect the flight patterns of migrating birds. The land in the town centre is primarily made up of grassland and woodland areas any do not represent a loss of habitat for the protected species found at Martin Mere.

- 6.6 It is not considered that the new development will have any significant impacts on the flight patterns of birds that wish to use Martin Mere SPA.
- 6.7 The River Tawd runs within the Masterplan boundary and alongside the proposed new town centre development. There are risks over the levels of surface water run off from impermeable surface, which could both cause a flood risk and potential pollution issues. The River Tawd is a tributary of the River Douglas, which is a significant waterway in the north of the District, and the impacts of flooding / pollution in the River Douglas could result in impacts on Martin Mere SPA.
- 6.8 However, the SPD recognises the issue of surface water run off, both in terms of the flood and pollution risks it presents, and therefore guidance and recommendations are provided to ensure that mitigation and management measures are put in place to reduce such risks, such mitigation measure will include the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDs) and promoting the use of permeable surfaces. These mitigation measures would also be required both through the construction process and within the final development.
- 6.9 Ribble / Alt Estuaries SPA: This SPA relates to two features, with the Ribble Estuary being located in the closest proximity to Skelmersdale (19.2km). ). But in terms of geographical distance it is not considered that the new town centre proposals will directly impact on Martin Mere SPA.
- 6.10 One of the primary reasons for both Estuaries designation as a European site is the rich diversity of birds, which either inhabit the mere on a regular or seasonal basis. It is not considered that the proposal will directly result in the damage of habitat at the Mere. However, consideration should be given to the impact that new development at Skelmersdale town centre may have on the flight patterns of migrating birds. The proposal does not involve the development of any tall buildings (i.e. over five storeys in height) nor does it propose the development of any large-scale turbines which are known to affect the flight patterns of migrating birds. The land in the town centre is primarily made up of grassland and woodland areas any do not represent a loss of habitat for the protected species found at either estuary location.
- 6.11 It is not considered that the new development will have any significant impacts on the flight patterns of birds that wish to use Ribble / Alt Estuaries SPA.
- 6.12 The River Tawd runs within the Masterplan boundary and alongside the proposed new town centre development. There are risks over the levels of surface water run off from impermeable surface, which could both cause a flood risk and potential pollution

issues. The River Tawd is a tributary of the River Douglas, which flows into the Ribble Estuary at Tarleton / Hesketh Bank, and the impacts of flooding / pollution in the River Douglas could result in impacts on Ribble Estuary SPA.

- 6.13 However, the SPD recognises the issue of surface water run off, both in terms of the flood and pollution risks it presents, and therefore guidance and recommendations are provided to ensure that mitigation and management measures are put in place to reduce such risks, such mitigation measure will include the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDs) and promoting the use of permeable surfaces. These mitigation measures would also be required both through the construction process and within the final development. Similar impacts to the Alt Estuary are not considered likely, as it is located within a separate catchment to the River Douglas.
- 6.14 Sefton Coast SAC: This site is located 23.6km from the development site in Skelmersdale and therefore is a significant geographical distance away from the development site. Furthermore it is not considered that there are any identifiable pathways which would connect Skelmersdale to the SAC.
- 6.15 The Sefton Coast SAC is protected primarily for its substantial stretch of dune system and the rare habitat that it provides for flora. The proposals for Skelmersdale Town Centre do not have a direct or indirect impact in the creation or loss of habitat in this area.
- 6.16 Dee Estuary SAC: This site is significantly detached from the proposed development in Skelmersdale and is included within the Screening Report primarily because of the resource requirements of the proposed new development.
- 6.17 Through discussions with United Utilities it has been identified that a proportion of the water for the town is sourced from the Dee Estuary, this proportion cannot be sufficiently estimated by United Utilities but it is considered to be limited with much of the water for Skelmersdale being sourced from local aquifers. However, the proposal for further development in Skelmersdale, including new residential and commercial properties could have the potential to create further water resource requirements for the town.
- 6.18 Following discussions with United Utilities the District Council are aware that investigations are underway to create new boreholes in the Bickerstaffe area, which would secure supplies in the Skelmersdale area in the future and place less reliance on the supplies from the Dee Estuary.
- 6.19 Given the timescales for development stretch for 10 – 15 years, United Utilities position to secure supplies and the small scale of reliance on supplies from the Dee Estuary currently, it is not thought that the resource implications on the Dee are sufficient to cause harm to the SAC.

## 7. Conclusions to the Screening Assessment

7.1 The screening assessment identifies that there are two sites within the authority area that are identified as having European importance as are accordingly designated as Natura 2000 sites. These are Martin Mere and the Ribble / Alt Estuaries (although it should be noted that the Alt Estuary is in fact in the adjacent authority area of Sefton), a further two sites have been considered within this assessment document which are located outside the boundaries, these being the SAC's of Sefton Coast and Dee Estuary.

### 7.2 Distance from Designated Sites

The Supplementary Planning Document this assessment is concerned with relates to the regeneration of Skelmersdale Town Centre, as plan 1 demonstrates there is little in the way of direct geographical relationship between the proposal area and the European sites identified, with Martin Mere SPA being the closest to the proposal site at 10.5km.

### 7.3 Key Features of Sites

The reason behind the designation of these sites mainly refer to the unique landscapes they provide and also for the specific bird species that use areas such as Martin Mere and the Ribble Estuaries, both for seasonal and regular habitats. It is concluded that no key features of these sites will be detrimentally harmed by these proposals.

### 7.4 Nature of Development

The proposal is for the creation of new retail premises and residential properties within an area allocated within the West Lancashire Replacement Plan Policy DE11 for town centre development. The site currently consists of a number of areas of green open space which will be lost as part of the development proposal. These sites, although contributing to the overall amenity to the town centre do not have any wildlife designation.

7.5 The development of the new town centre for Skelmersdale is anticipated to take up to 15 years, with town centre to be developed in phases, through the planning application process mitigation measure will be established to ensure that pollution to the local environment is strictly controlled, but given the distance between the development site and European Sites there not likely to be any cause for pollution as a result of development, either by air, groundwater or river sources.

### 7.6 Pathways and Receptors

The regeneration site is adjacent to the River Tawd, which could be considered to have an indirect link to the Ribble Estuary via the River Douglas. The SPD makes clear that pollution into the River Tawd from surface water run-off will not be permitted

as a result of new development. Therefore careful consideration will have to be required through the detailed planning phase to ensure that the issue of surface water run off from any hard surfaces within the town centre and appropriately dealt with thus not to cause any pollution risks to the River Tawd.

- 7.7 There will be further resource requirements put in place as a result of this development, through the development of new residential and commercial units this will be inevitable, this will mean an increased demand on energy and water supplies but it not considered that the scale of development would result on a significant increase in demand.
- 7.8 Following discussions with United Utilities no objections have been raised in the levels of capacity with local mains water and it is not considered that the proposed development will significantly affect demands for water from the Dee Estuary, particularly as only a proportion of the water is sourced from the Dee Estuary with Skelmersdale being well sourced by local aquifers. Furthermore the development for residential / town centre development is in-line with targets set out within the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West which has also undergone Habitats Regulation Assessment.
- 7.9 It is concluded that subject to the above mitigation and management measure being introduced that there will be no detrimental impacts on European sites through any of the above pathways.

#### Cumulative Impacts: In Combination

- 7.10 The SPD relating to the development of Skelmersdale Town Centre elaborates on Policy DE11 of the West Lancashire Local Plan, which encourages the development of town centre uses on the site in order to assist in the regeneration of the town as a whole. The Local Plan for West Lancashire sets out a planning Framework for the District and also includes Policy EN1, which protects environmentally sensitive sites, from local to International importance, from inappropriate development.
- 7.11 There are no other plans, policies or strategies other than Local Plan policy that provide any planning framework for the future development of Skelmersdale Town Centre. A number of supplementary planning documents exist for a number of small development sites within the town but given the limited size of these sites and the lack of connections with any European Site then cumulative impacts of implementing all proposal is not considered to be significant.
- 7.12 In terms of plans and policies from neighbouring authorities, each authority area as a either a Development Plan or Core Strategy that will guide future development in their authority area, in all cases such Plans / Strategies will contain policies that will seek to protect important habitats and designated wildlife sites. It is not known of any

specific plans or policies that are being prepared by other neighbouring authorities that will impact on these designated sites, neither directly nor cumulatively.

## **8. No Significant Impacts Statement**

- 8.1 For the reasons given in Section 7 above it is concluded that the development proposals as set out within the Skelmersdale Town Centre Masterplan SPD will have no detrimental impacts, either singularly or cumulatively, on the European Designated sites as set out in this report.

## Appendix A:

### Site Location and Description

## Site Location and Description

As part of this screening stage it is important to identify all European sites within and in close proximity to West Lancashire. These are listed with their key characteristics below:

Name and Location of International Site	Martin Mere SPA (see Figure 1 for location Details)
Site Designation Status	Special Protection Area, RAMSAR
Area Covered	119.3ha
Condition	100% Favourable
Brief Description of the Site	<p>Martin Mere SPA comprises the following types of habitat:</p> <p>Inland Water Bodies (standing / running water) 13.5%</p> <p>Bogs, Marshes, Water Fringed Vegetation &amp; Fens 7%</p> <p>Humid Grassland / Mesophile Grassland 78.5%</p> <p>Broad Leaved Deciduous Woodland 1%</p>
<p>Martin Mere is a low-lying wetland complex of open water, marsh and grassland habitats overlying deep peat. It is situated to the north of Burscough and occupies part of the site of the old Martin Mere which, prior to drainage, was probably the largest lake in Lancashire. Following the acquisition by the Wildfowl Trust in 1974, the rough grazed pasture was transformed by positive management techniques into a reserve of international importance for waterfowl.</p> <p>The principle interest of the site lies in the numbers of migrant birds which it supports during the winter months, with the overall numbers of wildfowl regularly in excess of 10,000 and over 100 different species using the Mere as a wintering ground. Of particular importance are the wintering populations of pink-footed geese, teal and pintail, which, by representing more than 1% of their total North West European populations, reinforce the international status of this site.</p> <p>Martin Mere also supports nationally important numbers of Berwick's swan, gadwall, mallard, whooper swan and shoveler with numbers regularly in excess of 1% of the total British wintering population. Nationally exceptional numbers of snipe, lapwing and black tailed godwit have been recorded, and the wintering flock of Ruff is believed to be the largest in Britain. The breeding community is diverse, totalling over 35 species, and includes important breeding populations of greylag goose, gadwall, mallard and snipe.</p> <p>In total, over 150 species of birds have been recorded at the site and this includes several unusual species, such as avocet, lesser yellowlegs, pratincole, marsh sandpiper and white-winged black tern which have been recorded. Martin Mere is, this, of exceptional value for the wealth and diversity of its avifauna.</p> <p>Additional scientific interest is provided by the presence of two locally important plant species: water dropwort (<i>Oenanthe fistulosa</i>) which is regionally scarce and whorled caraway (<i>Carum verticillatum</i>) found here in abundance in its only Lancashire locality, and one of very few sites in the north of England.</p> <p>(Source: JNCC)</p>	

Name and Location of International Site	Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA (See Figure 1 for location details).
Site Designation Status	Special Protection Area, RAMSAR
Area Covered	12412.31ha
Condition	No Data
Brief Description of the Site	Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA comprising the following habitats: Sand / shingle Shores (including Sand Dunes) 8% Tidal Flats 75% Salt Marshes 16% Fresh Water Marshes / Pools 1%
<p>The Ribble and Alt Estuaries lie on the Irish Sea coast of the North West of England. The site comprises two estuaries, of which the River Ribble is by far the larger, together with extensive areas of sandy foreshore along the Sefton Coast. The site consists of extensive sand-and-mud flats and, particularly in the Ribble Estuary, large areas of saltmarsh. There are also areas of coastal grazing marsh located behind the sea embankments.</p> <p>The Ribble and Alt Estuaries contain extensive areas of intertidal sand and mudflats. These are backed by, on the Ribble, one of the most extensive areas of grazed saltmarsh in Britain and, along the Sefton Coast, the largest calcareous dune complex in north-western England.</p> <p>The intertidal flats support internationally important populations of waterfowl which feed on a rich invertebrate fauna and <i>Enteromorpha</i> beds.</p> <p>The saltmarsh supports a range of vegetation communities typical of north-west England maintained by stable grazing regimes. However, the estuary is accreting in response to large-scale land claim, with <i>Spartina anglica</i> dominant in the pioneer stages with <i>Festuca rubra</i> and <i>Puccinellina maritime</i> dominating the grazed sward. Natural transitions are prevented by coastal defence structures. Small areas of saltmarsh also occur in discrete locations along the Sefton Coast.</p> <p>The sand dunes display a full range of plant communities and habitat types from embryo to grey dunes with transitions to dune grassland and heath. Numerous species-rich slacks can be found throughout the dune transition but generally the extent of vegetation cover and species diversity increases with distance from the sea. <i>Elytrigia juncea</i> and <i>Elymus arenarius</i> dominate the embryo dunes, being replaced by <i>Ammophila arenaria</i> in the mobile yellow dunes; large areas of bare sand are still present. Two distinct types of vegetation dominate the extensive grey dunes, the first a <i>Festuca rubra</i> / <i>Rubus caesius</i> dune pasture and a <i>Salix repens</i> / <i>R. caesius</i> / dwarf shrub. These dunes support two large coniferous plantations which support a distinct flora. Elsewhere, in the absence of management, smaller areas of secondary deciduous scrub/woodland remain including Hippophae rhamnoides. Dune slacks are regularly found throughout the dune complex. Normally dominated by creeping willow, they also support a diverse flora, including the nationally rare liverwort. Dune grassland and heath occupy fragmented locations on the edge of the system.</p> <p>(Source: JNCC)</p>	

Name and Location of International Site	Sefton Coast SAC (see Figure 1 for location details)
Site Designation Status	Special Area of Conservation
Area Covered	4563.97ha
Condition	No Data
Brief Description of the Site	Tidal Rivers, Mud flats, Sand flats, Lagoons (including Saltwork Basins) 50%, Coastal Sand dunes, Sand beaches, Machair (30%), Heath, Scrub, Maquis and garrique, Phygrana (10%), Coniferous Woodland (10%)

The Sefton Coast in north-west England displays both rapid erosion and active progradation. Embryonic shifting dunes are of the northern, lyme-grass *Leymus arenarius*, type and are mainly associated with the areas of progradation, though vegetation dominated by lyme-grass is also found associated with areas of persistent, heavy disturbance further inland.

A substantial stretch of the Sefton Coast dune system in north-west England is fronted by about 163 ha of shifting dunes. Marram *Ammophila arenaria* usually dominates the mobile dunes, amidst considerable areas of blown sand. Where rates of sand deposition decline, lyme grass *Leymus arenarius*, sea-holly *Eryngium maritimum* and cat's-ear *Hypochaeris radicata* occur, with red fescue *Festuca rubra* and spreading meadow-grass *Poa humilis* present on the more sheltered ridges. Sea spurge *Euphorbia paralias* and the nationally scarce dune fescue *Vulpia fasciculata* are frequent, while sea bindweed *Calystegia soldanella* is very local. Formby Point is the hinge point between two coastal sub-cells. The zone around the Point has been eroding since 1906 while areas north and south of this zone are accreting (where the nature of the coast allows). The rapid erosion is therefore reducing the area of shifting dunes at Formby, and high, steep eroding dunes abut the beach with extensive areas of blown sand immediately inland.

Sefton Coast is a large area of predominantly calcareous dune vegetation in north-west England. The sequence of habitats from foredunes to dune grassland and dune slack is extensive, and substantial areas of open dune vegetation remain. There are large areas of semi-fixed and fixed dunes with herbaceous vegetation exhibiting considerable variation from calcareous to acidic. In the calcareous areas common restharrow *Ononis repens* is prominent. There are small but significant areas of decalcified sand with grey hair-grass *Corynephorus canescens*, a species more characteristic of decalcified fixed dunes in the east of England and around the Baltic.

At Sefton Coast on the north-west coast of England there are extensive dune slacks dominated by creeping willow *Salix repens* ssp. *argentea*, making this site particularly important for dunes with *Salix repens* ssp. *argentea*. Radley (1994) estimated that 99 ha, or 43% of the total English resource of the main dune slack community dominated by creeping willow occurred here. The species also dominates areas of free-draining dune grassland to a much greater extent than at most other UK sites. Despite some urban and recreational development, both successional and geomorphological processes are still active and the structure and function of the site as a whole is still well-conserved. Management, including partial removal of planted conifers, has taken place in recent years to maintain and enhance these processes.

Sefton Coast is a large area of predominantly calcareous dune vegetation, containing extensive areas representative of Humid dune slacks in north-west England. Some active slack formation can still be seen and a variety of successional stages are represented. The sequence from foredunes to dune grassland and dune slack is extensive. The site contributes to the range and variation of humid dune slack vegetation, being a large and representative base-rich system towards the northern limit for some humid dune slack communities along the west coast of Britain.

(Source: JNCC)

Name and Location of International Site	Dee Estuary SAC (see Figure 1 for location details)
Site Designation Status	Special Area of Conservation – Candidate Site for European Status, RAMSAR.
Area Covered	15805.07ha
Condition	No Data
Brief Description of the Site	Tidal rivers. Estuaries. Mud flats. Sand flats Lagoons (including saltwork basins) (81.8%), Salt marshes. Salt pastures. Salt steppes (16.1%), Coastal sand dunes. Sand beaches. Machair (0.7%), Shingle. Sea cliffs. Islets (0.5%), Bogs. Marshes. Water fringed vegetation. Fens (0.4%), Humid grassland. Mesophile grassland (0.2%), Improved grassland (0.1%), Broad-leaved deciduous woodland (0.1%), Other land (including towns, villages, roads, waste places, mines, industrial sites) (0.1%).
<p>The Dee Estuary is representative of pioneer glasswort <i>Salicornia</i> spp. saltmarsh in the north-west of the UK. <i>Salicornia</i> spp. saltmarsh forms extensive stands in the Dee, especially on the more sandy muds where there is reduced tidal scour. It mainly occurs on the seaward fringes as a pioneer community, and moving landwards usually forms a transition to common saltmarsh-grass <i>Puccinellia maritima</i> saltmarsh (SM10). There is also a low frequency of <i>Salicornia</i> spp. extending well inland. Associated species often include annual sea-blite <i>Suaeda maritima</i> and hybrid scurvy grass <i>Cochlearia x hollandica</i>.</p> <p>The Dee Estuary is representative of H1330 Atlantic salt meadows in the north-west of the UK. It forms the most extensive type of saltmarsh in the Dee, and since the 1980s it has probably displaced very large quantities of the non-native common cord-grass <i>Spartina anglica</i>. The high accretion rates found in the estuary are likely to favour further development of this type of vegetation. The saltmarsh is regularly inundated by the sea; characteristic salt-tolerant perennial flowering plant species include common saltmarsh-grass <i>Puccinellia maritima</i>, sea aster <i>Aster tripolium</i>, and sea arrowgrass <i>Triglochin maritima</i>. In a few areas there are unusual transitions to wet woodland habitats.</p> <p>(Source: JNCC)</p>	

**Appendix B:**

**Site Screening Assessment**

# Screening Assessment Criteria – Martin Mere SPA

Describe the individual elements of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on the Natura 2000 site(s).

## Background to the SPD

- The Skelmersdale Town Centre SPD provides guidance on the regeneration of Skelmersdale Town Centre; the main thrust of the SPD is to develop a new high street linking the Concourse Centre and Asda. This will include a variety of retail, leisure, office and residential uses. The town centre core will also include a range of new community facilities such as a library, sports centre and ecumenical centre. All new development will be built to the highest standard of design and will be a massive investment into the town. Surrounding this will be other new uses including residential housing, improvements to the wooded Cloughs in terms of both their environmental and recreational value. Road links and pedestrian / cycling facilities will be improved around the town centre area. The new uses within the town centre will create new jobs and training opportunities for local people.
- The wooded Cloughs, which are locally important, are to be enhanced, both environmentally but also to provide a valued recreational resource for the residents and visitors to the town. Improvement management plans will be put in place to ensure that these areas are effectively managed to maximise protection and enhancement on these areas.

## Scope of the SPD

- The Skelmersdale Town Centre SPD will not have a direct impact on Martin Mere SPA, as the guidance will only apply to Skelmersdale Town Centre, which is not adjacent to or close proximity of, the Area of Special Protection.

## Supporting Guidance

- The guidance in the SPD elaborates on existing planning guidance found within Policy DE11 of the West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan (WLRLP), which allocates the site for future development connected with the regeneration of the town centre. The WLRLP was formally adopted as the Development Plan for the District in July 2006.

## Geographical Location

- As highlighted in figure 3 of the Screening Report Skelmersdale is located to the South East of the West Lancashire District area, with Martin Mere located 10.5km to the North West and it is considered that there is a significant geographical gap between the two areas, meaning that the potential for direct impacts on the Natura 2000 is considered as not significant.

## Key Features of the Natura 2000 site and Potential Impacts

- Martin Mere has a European Designation primarily for its range of bird species and the habitat it provides. The proposal does not identify and direct impacts in terms of loss of species and loss of habitat at Martin Mere SPA. However there are a number of in-direct impacts that should be considered as a result of the proposals.

## Direct Impacts on Natura 2000 site

- It is not considered that there will be any detrimental impact to the Natura 2000 site from these proposals.

## In-Direct Impacts and Pathways

- This includes the potential impact on Migrating birds, and bird flight patterns as a result of new development. The proposal does not involve the creation of any tall buildings (i.e. over four storeys in height) nor does it propose the development of anything that could act as a serious impediment to the movement of birds (such as large scale wind turbines). Therefore this impact has been assessed and it concluded that the proposal does not create a significant impact on the flight patterns of birds using Martin Mere.

## Other Plans and Projects

- Policy ER5 of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West (RPG13, 2000) advises that Local Planning Authorities and other agencies should give the

	<p>strongest level of protection to sites with international and nation nature conservation designations, which is reflected in the Joint Lancashire Structure Plan and West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan, where Policy EN1 states that the strongest possible protection will be given to nature conservation sites, including Martin Mere. The SPA is within, and surrounded by, Green Belt, which significantly restricts development within the locality. There are no major development schemes planned for land directly adjacent to the SPA or within neighbouring rural settlements nor are there any plans / projects and policies that in combination with this SPD will have any impact on this Natura 2000 site.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As part of the future planning application process the applicant will be required to undertake a full Environmental Impact Assessment, which will include assessments relating to ecology, landscape and water quality issues.</li> </ul>
<p>Describe any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the Natura 2000 sites by virtue of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Size and scale;</li> <li>Land-take;</li> <li>Distance from the Natura 2000 site or key features of the site;</li> <li>Resource requirements (water abstraction etc.);</li> <li>Emissions (disposal to land, water or air);</li> <li>Excavation requirements;</li> <li>Duration of construction, operation, decommissioning etc;</li> <li>Other.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Size and Scale:</b> The SPD will only apply to a specific area of the District, that being Skelmersdale Town Centre (for definition of boundaries please see figure 2).</p> <p><b>Land-take:</b> The SPD refers a specific area of land allocated by Policy DE11 of the West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan. The SPD does not propose to develop land within, or adjacent to this Natura 2000 site.</p> <p><b>Distance from the Natura 2000 site or Key Features:</b> The site is approximately 10.5km from Skelmersdale Town Centre, which is the closest Natura 2000 Site to the development proposals.</p> <p><b>Resource Requirements:</b> The SPD encourages the use of sustainable sources of energy and the use of sustainable materials that have been sourced locally; there will be no resource requirements from the Natura 2000 site, nor will there be any resource requirements on any sites that have any indirect links with the Natura 2000 site.</p> <p><b>Emissions:</b> Emissions to air will be present through the construction period of the town centre, but careful control and management of such emissions will ensure that no impacts are felt either in the locality of the Skelmersdale Town Centre nor at this Natura 2000 site, either directly or in-directly. Emissions to water through surface run off will also have to be closely controlled through the use of Sustainable Drainage systems and the promotion of impermeable surfaces. Again such features will ensure that no impacts are felt at this site, either directly or in-directly.</p> <p><b>Excavation Requirements:</b> There will not any significant requirements for excavation work as a result of this SPD above any normal foundation works. It is hoped that the existing ground levels can be used to the advantage of the development. The proposal will not result in any excavation works taking place at the SPA.</p> <p><b>Transport Requirements:</b> The SPD does not introduce any further requirements for resources.</p> <p><b>Duration of Construction, Operation etc.:</b> The development is likely to be undertaken in a phased approach with development likely to continue over a 10 – 15 year period. Once construction is completed the operation of the town centre will be ongoing, as will maintenance / management plans.</p>
<p>Describe and likely changes to the site arising as a result of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction of habitat area;</li> <li>Disturbance to key species;</li> <li>Habitat or species fragmentation;</li> <li>Reduction in species density;</li> <li>Changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc);</li> <li>Climate change.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Reduction of habitat area:</b> The implementation of this guidance will not result in a physical reduction in the area of habitat of the SPA.</p> <p><b>Disturbance to key species:</b> Key species to Martin Mere SPA include a range of birds, who regularly / seasonally use Martin Mere as a habitat. It is not considered that the proposal in Skelmersdale will directly result in damage to the habitat at the Martin Mere. It is not considered that the town centre proposals will have any impacts on the flight patterns of migrating birds.</p> <p><b>Habitat or Species Fragmentation:</b> Implementation of guidance in the SPD will not result in habitat or species fragmentation.</p> <p><b>Reduction in species density:</b> Implementation of guidance in the SPD will not result in a reduction of species density.</p> <p><b>Changes in key indicators:</b> Implementation of guidance in the SPD will not result in changes to key indicators.</p> <p><b>Climate Change:</b> The SPD is encouraging towards the use of renewable energies within new development and high standard of design to be included; this can only act as a positive role in assisting to prevent climate change.</p>
<p>Describe any likely impacts on the Natura 2000 site as a whole in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interference with the key relationships</li> </ul>	<p><b>Interference with key relationships that define the structure of the site:</b> Given the distance between the proposal area and the SPA there will be no direct relationship with the site. The pathways identified (i.e. watercourses and flight paths of birds) will not be interfered with as part of this development process.</p> <p><b>Interference with key relationships that define the function of the site:</b> The development of Skelmersdale Town Centre will not impact on the key function of</p>

<p>that define the <u>structure</u> of the site;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interference with the key relationships that define the <u>function</u> of the site.</li> </ul>	<p>Martin Mere SPA as a unique / important habitat for birds.</p>
<p>Describe any likely impacts on the Natura 2000 site(s) in the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Short term;</li> <li>▪ Medium term; and</li> <li>▪ Long term.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Short-term Impacts:</u></b> No likely impacts on this site in the short term.  <b><u>Medium-term Impacts:</u></b> No likely impacts on this site in the medium term.  <b><u>Long-term Impacts:</u></b> No likely impacts on this site in the long term.</p>
<p>Provide any indicators of significance as a result of the identification of effect set out above in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss;</li> <li>• Fragmentation;</li> <li>• Disruption;</li> <li>• Disturbance;</li> <li>• Change to key elements of the site (e.g. water quality etc).</li> </ul>	<p>As it has been identified that there will be no effect to the Natura 2000 site then no indicators are provided.</p>
<p>Describe from the above those elements of the project or plan, or combination of elements, where the above impacts are likely to be significant or where the scale or magnitude of impacts is not known.</p>	<p>As stated earlier, this SPD elaborates on planning guidance set out within Policy DE11 of the West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan 2001 – 2016 which allocates land in Skelmersdale Town Centre for the development of Town Centre Uses. The Regional Spatial Strategy Policy RDF1 identifies Skelmersdale as a Regional Town in the North West, encouraging development that will support urban regeneration and economic growth.</p> <p>There are a number of Supplementary Planning Guidance Documents, which refer to small sites within Skelmersdale and potential future development, but these are small in scale and it is not considered that the development of these sites, plus the town centre site will result in any detrimental impact on the Natura 2000 site.</p> <p>No other large scale plans / programme and policies are known in other neighbouring authorities, which would have a cumulative detrimental affect on the Natura 2000 site.</p>

# Screening Assessment Criteria – Ribble / Alt Estuaries SPA

Describe the individual elements of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on the Natura 2000 site(s).

## Background to the SPD

- The Skelmersdale Town Centre SPD provides guidance on the regeneration of Skelmersdale Town Centre; the main thrust of the SPD is to develop a new high street linking the Concourse Centre and Asda. This will include a variety of retail, leisure, office and residential uses. The town centre core will also include a range of new community facilities such as a library, sports centre and ecumenical centre. All new development will be built to the highest standard of design and will be a massive investment into the town. Surrounding this will be other new uses including residential housing, improvements to the wooded Cloughs in terms of both their environmental and recreational value. Road links and pedestrian / cycling facilities will be improved around the town centre area. The new uses within the town centre will create new jobs and training opportunities for local people.
- The wooded Cloughs, which are locally important, are to be enhanced, both environmentally but also to provide a valued recreational resource for the residents and visitors to the town. Improvement management plans will be put in place to ensure that these areas are effectively managed to maximise protection and enhancement on these areas.

## Scope of the SPD

- The Skelmersdale Town Centre SPD will not have a direct impact on the Ribble / Alt Estuaries SPA, as the guidance will only apply to Skelmersdale Town Centre, which is not adjacent to or close proximity of, the Area of Special Protection.

## Supporting Guidance

- The guidance in the SPD elaborates on existing planning guidance found within Policy DE11 of the West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan (WLRLP), which allocates the site for future development connected with the regeneration of the town centre. The WLRLP was formally adopted as the Development Plan for the District in July 2006.

## Geographical Location

- As highlighted in figure 3 of the Screening Report, Skelmersdale is located to the South East of the West Lancashire District area, with the Ribble Estuary located 19.2km to the north and it is considered that there is a significant geographical gap between the two areas, meaning that the potential for direct impacts on the Natura 2000 is considered to be not significant. The Alt Estuary is located within the neighbouring authority of Sefton and is of a distance of 19.6 km from the proposal area, which is a greater geographical distance than that of the Ribble Estuary.

## Key Features of the Natura 2000 site and Potential Impacts

- Both the Alt and Ribble estuaries have a European Designation primarily for its range of bird species and the habitat it provides. The proposal does not affect the key features of either Natura 2000 site in terms of loss of species and loss of habitat at with the Alt or Ribble Estuary SPA. However there are a number of in-direct impacts that should be considered as a result of the proposals.

## Direct Impacts on Natura 2000 site(s)

- It is not considered that there will be any detrimental impact to the Natura 2000 site from these proposals.

## In-Direct Impacts and Pathways

- This includes the potential impact on Migrating birds, and bird flight patterns as a result of new development. The proposal does not involve the creation of any tall buildings (i.e. over four storeys in height) nor does it propose the development of anything that could act as a serious impediment to the movement of birds (such as large scale wind turbines). Therefore this impact has been assessed and it concluded that the proposal does not create a significant impact on the flight patterns of birds using the Alt / Ribble Estuary.
- The proposal site is adjacent to the River Tawd, which is a tributary of the River Douglas which flows into the Ribble Estuary. This has been identified as a

	<p>potential pathway between the proposal site and the SPA. However careful management and planning control, encouraging the use of mitigation through the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems and the use of impermeable surfaces, will ensure that potential sources of pollution are managed and monitored in an appropriate manner.</p> <p><u>Other Plans and Projects</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Policy ER5 of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West (RPG13, 2000) advises that Local Planning Authorities and other agencies should give the strongest level of protection to sites with international and national nature conservation designations, which is reflected in the Joint Lancashire Structure Plan and West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan, where Policy EN1 states that the strongest possible protection will be given to nature conservation sites, including Martin Mere. The SPA is within, and surrounded by, Green Belt, which significantly restricts development within the locality. There are no major development schemes planned for land directly adjacent to the SPA or within neighbouring rural settlements nor are there any plans / projects and policies that in combination with this SPD will have any impact on this Natura 2000 site.</li> <li>▪ As part of the future planning application process the applicant will be required to undertake a full Environmental Impact Assessment, which will include assessments relating to ecology, landscape and water quality issues.</li> </ul>
<p>Describe any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the Natura 2000 sites by virtue of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Size and scale;</li> <li>• Land-take;</li> <li>• Distance from the Natura 2000 site or key features of the site;</li> <li>• Resource requirements (water abstraction etc.);</li> <li>• Emissions (disposal to land, water or air);</li> <li>• Excavation requirements;</li> <li>• Duration of construction, operation, decommissioning etc;</li> <li>• Other.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Size and Scale:</u></b> The SPD will only apply to a specific area of the District, that being Skelmersdale Town Centre (for definition of boundaries see figure 2).</p> <p><b><u>Land-take:</u></b> The SPD refers a specific area of land allocated by Policy DE11 of the West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan. The SPD does not propose to develop land within, or adjacent to these Natura 2000 sites.</p> <p><b><u>Distance from the Natura 2000 site or Key Features:</u></b> The Ribble Estuary is approximately 19.2km from Skelmersdale Town Centre; the Alt Estuary is 19.6 km away from the proposal site.</p> <p><b><u>Resource Requirements:</u></b> The SPD encourages the use of sustainable sources of energy and the use of sustainable materials that have been sourced locally; there should be no impact on the SPA; there will be no resource requirements from the Natura 2000 site(s), nor will there be any resource requirements on any sites that have any indirect relationship with these Natura 2000 sites.</p> <p><b><u>Emissions:</u></b> Implementation of this guidance should not result in generation of emissions that will harm the sites at either the Ribble or Alt Estuaries. The River Tawd, which runs adjacent to the development site, does have an indirect link with the Ribble Estuary via the River Douglas. However provided that there is appropriate management of the surface water run off from the new development there is no reason to expect that any pollutants will harm either SPA.</p> <p><b><u>Excavation Requirements:</u></b> There will not any significant requirements for excavation work as a result of this SPD above any normal foundation works. It is hoped that the existing ground levels can be used to the advantage of the development. The proposal will not result in any excavation works taking place at the SPA.</p> <p><b><u>Transport Requirements:</u></b> The SPD does not introduce any further requirements for resources.</p> <p><b><u>Duration of Construction, Operation etc.:</u></b> The development is likely to be undertaken in a phased approach with development likely to continue over a 10 – 15 year period. Once construction is completed the operation of the town centre will be ongoing, as will maintenance management plans.</p>
<p>Describe and likely changes to the site arising as a result of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction of habitat area;</li> <li>• Disturbance to key species;</li> <li>• Habitat or species fragmentation;</li> <li>• Reduction in species density;</li> <li>• Changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc);</li> <li>• Climate change.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Reduction of habitat area:</u></b> The implementation of this guidance will not result in a physical reduction in the area of habitat of the SPA.</p> <p><b><u>Disturbance to key species:</u></b> Key species to both the Alt and Ribble Estuary SPA include a range of birds, who regularly / seasonally use Martin Mere as a habitat. It is not considered that the proposal in Skelmersdale will directly result in damage to the habitat at the Martin Mere. It is not considered that the town centre proposals will have any impacts on the flight patterns of migrating birds.</p> <p><b><u>Habitat or Species Fragmentation:</u></b> Implementation of guidance in the SPD will not result in habitat or species fragmentation, due to the distance from Skelmersdale Town Centre.</p> <p><b><u>Reduction in species density:</u></b> Implementation of guidance in the SPD will not result in a reduction of species density, due to the distance from Skelmersdale Town Centre.</p> <p><b><u>Changes in key indicators:</u></b> Implementation of guidance in the SPD will not result in changes to key indicators, due to the distance from Skelmersdale Town</p>

	<p>Centre.</p> <p><b>Climate Change:</b> The SPD is encouraging towards the use of renewable energies within new development and high standard of design to be included; this can only act as a positive role in assisting to prevent climate change.</p>
<p>Describe any likely impacts on the Natura 2000 site as a whole in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interference with the key relationships that define the structure of the site;</li> <li>• Interference with the key relationships that define the function of the site.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Interference with key relationships that define the structure of the site:</b> Given the distance between the proposal area and the SPA there will be no direct relationship with the site. The pathways identified (i.e. watercourses and flight paths of birds) will not be interfered with as part of this development process.</p> <p><b>Interference with key relationships that define the function of the site:</b> The development of Skelmersdale Town Centre will not impact on the key function of Alt / Ribble Estuary SPA as a unique / important habitat for birds.</p>
<p>Describe any likely impacts on the Natura 2000 site(s) in the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Short term;</li> <li>▪ Medium term; and</li> <li>▪ Long term.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Short-term Impacts:</b> No likely impacts on these sites in the short term.</p> <p><b>Medium-term Impacts:</b> No likely impacts on these sites in the medium term.</p> <p><b>Long-term Impacts:</b> No likely impacts on these sites in the long term.</p>
<p>Provide any indicators of significance as a result of the identification of effect set out above in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss;</li> <li>• Fragmentation;</li> <li>• Disruption;</li> <li>• Disturbance;</li> <li>• Change to key elements of the site (e.g. water quality etc).</li> </ul>	<p>As it has been identified that there will be no effect to the Natura 2000 site then no indicators are provided.</p>
<p>Describe from the above those elements of the project or plan, or combination of elements, where the above impacts are likely to be significant or where the scale or magnitude of impacts is not known.</p>	<p>As stated earlier, this SPD elaborates on planning guidance set out within Policy DE11 of the West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan 2001 – 2016 which allocates land in Skelmersdale Town Centre for the development of Town Centre Uses. The Regional Spatial Strategy Policy RDF1 identifies Skelmersdale as a Regional Town in the North West, encouraging development that will support urban regeneration and economic growth.</p> <p>There are a number of Supplementary Planning Guidance Documents, which refer to small sites within Skelmersdale and potential future development, but these are small in scale and it is not considered that the development of these sites, plus the town centre site will result in any detrimental impact on the Natura 2000 site.</p> <p>A strategy for the creation of a 'Ribble Estuary Regional Park' seeks to establish the estuary as a eco-tourism focus point, which may create impacts on the SPA in the future, however it is not thought that the implementation of the Skelmersdale Town Centre SPD will increase / decrease the detrimental affect on the SPA.</p> <p>No other large scale plans / programme and policies are known in other neighbouring authorities, which would have a cumulative detrimental affect on the Natura 2000 site.</p>

# Screening Assessment Criteria – Sefton Coast SAC

Describe the individual elements of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on the Natura 2000 site(s).

## Background to the SPD

- The Skelmersdale Town Centre SPD provides guidance on the regeneration of Skelmersdale Town Centre; the main thrust of the SPD is to develop a new high street linking the Concourse Centre and Asda. This will include a variety of retail, leisure, office and residential uses. The town centre core will also include a range of new community facilities such as a library, sports centre and ecumenical centre. All new development will be built to the highest standard of design and will be a massive investment into the town. Surrounding this will be other new uses including residential housing, improvements to the wooded Cloughs in terms of both their environmental and recreational value. Road links and pedestrian / cycling facilities will be improved around the town centre area. The new uses within the town centre will create new jobs and training opportunities for local people.
- The wooded Cloughs, which are locally important, are to be enhanced, both environmentally but also to provide a valued recreational resource for the residents and visitors to the town. Improvement management plans will be put in place to ensure that these areas are effectively managed to maximise protection and enhancement on these areas.

## Scope of the SPD

- The Skelmersdale Town Centre SPD will not have a direct impact on the Sefton Coast SAC, as the guidance will only apply to Skelmersdale Town Centre, which is not adjacent to or close proximity of, the Special Area of Protection.

## Supporting Guidance

- The guidance in the SPD elaborates on existing planning guidance found within Policy DE11 of the West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan (WLRLP), which allocates the site for future development connected with the regeneration of the town centre. The WLRLP was formally adopted as the Development Plan for the District in July 2006.

## Geographical Location

- As highlighted in figure 3 of the Screening Report, Skelmersdale is located to the South East of the West Lancashire District area, with the Sefton Coast situated 19.2km to the East and it is considered that there is a significant geographical gap between the two areas, meaning that the potential for direct impacts on the Natura 2000 is considered to be not significant. The Sefton Coast SAC is located within the neighbouring authority of Sefton.

## Key Features of the Natura 2000 site and Potential Impacts

- The Sefton Coast SAC has a European Designation primarily the unique coastal dunes habitat that it provides. The proposal does not identify and direct impacts in terms of loss of species and loss of habitat at Sefton Coast SAC. However there are a number of in-direct impacts that should be considered as a result of the proposals.

## Direct Impacts on Natura 2000 site

- It is not considered that there will be any detrimental impact to the Natura 2000 site from these proposals.

## In-Direct Impacts and Pathways

- A wide range of protected species of flora and fauna are found in the dune systems of the Sefton Coast. It is not felt that there will be any in-direct impacts or pathways that could result in a detrimental impact on the dune system and the important ecosystem it provides.

## Other Plans and Projects

- Policy ER5 of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West (RPG13, 2000) advises that Local Planning Authorities and other agencies should give the strongest level of protection to sites with international and national nature conservation designations, which is reflected in the Joint Lancashire Structure Plan and West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan, where Policy EN1 states that the strongest possible protection will be given to nature conservation sites,

	<p>including Martin Mere. The SAC is protected by Policy NC1 of the Sefton Unitary Development Plan, which significantly restricts development within the locality. It is known that Sefton MBC are seeking to regenerate the Promenade area of the Southport, which is on land adjacent to this SAC. The impacts of such a development on the SAC is unknown but is not considered that on a cumulatively the Skelmersdale SPD will in-combination cause a detrimental impact on the SAC.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As part of the future planning application process the applicant will be required to undertake a full Environmental Impact Assessment, which will include assessments relating to ecology, landscape and water quality issues.</li> </ul>
<p>Describe any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the Natura 2000 sites by virtue of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Size and scale;</li> <li>Land-take;</li> <li>Distance from the Natura 2000 site or key features of the site;</li> <li>Resource requirements (water abstraction etc.);</li> <li>Emissions (disposal to land, water or air);</li> <li>Excavation requirements;</li> <li>Duration of construction, operation, decommissioning etc;</li> <li>Other.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Size and Scale:</b> The SPD will only apply to a specific area of the District, that being Skelmersdale Town Centre (for definition of boundaries please see figure 2).</p> <p><b>Land-take:</b> The SPD refers a specific area of land allocated by Policy DE11 of the West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan. The SPD does not propose to develop land within, or adjacent to this Natura 2000 site.</p> <p><b>Distance from the Natura 2000 site or Key Features:</b> The site is approximately 21.9km from Skelmersdale Town Centre.</p> <p><b>Resource Requirements:</b> The SPD encourages the use of sustainable sources of energy and the use of sustainable materials that have been sourced locally; there will be no resource requirements from the Natura 2000 site, nor will there be any resource requirements on any sites that have any indirect links with this Natura 2000 site.</p> <p><b>Emissions:</b> Emissions to air will be present through the construction period of the town centre, but careful control and management of such emissions will ensure that no impacts are felt either in the locality of the Skelmersdale Town Centre nor at this Natura 2000 site, either directly or in-directly. Emissions to water through surface run off will also have to be closely controlled through the use of Sustainable Drainage systems and the promotion of impermeable surfaces. Again such features will ensure that no impacts are felt at this site, either directly or indirectly.</p> <p><b>Excavation Requirements:</b> There will not any significant requirements for excavation work as a result of this SPD above any normal foundation works. It is hoped that the existing ground levels can be used to the advantage of the development. The proposal will not result in any excavation works taking place at the SAC.</p> <p><b>Transport Requirements:</b> The SPD does not introduce any further requirements for resources.</p> <p><b>Duration of Construction, Operation etc.:</b> The development is likely to be undertaken in a phased approach with development likely to continue over a 10 – 15 year period. Once construction is completed the operation of the town centre will be ongoing.</p>
<p>Describe and likely changes to the site arising as a result of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduction of habitat area;</li> <li>Disturbance to key species;</li> <li>Habitat or species fragmentation;</li> <li>Reduction in species density;</li> <li>Changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc);</li> <li>Climate change.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Reduction of habitat area:</b> The implementation of this guidance will not result in a physical reduction in the area of habitat of the SAC.</p> <p><b>Disturbance to key species:</b> Key species to the Sefton Coast include a range of flora and fauna. It is not considered that the proposal in Skelmersdale will directly result in damage to the habitat and ecology of the Sefton Coast SAC.</p> <p><b>Habitat or Species Fragmentation:</b> Implementation of guidance in the SPD will not result in habitat or species fragmentation.</p> <p><b>Reduction in species density:</b> Implementation of guidance in the SPD will not result in a reduction of species density.</p> <p><b>Changes in key indicators:</b> Implementation of guidance in the SPD will not result in changes to key indicators.</p> <p><b>Climate Change:</b> The SPD is encouraging towards the use of renewable energies within new development and high standard of design to be included; this can only act as a positive role in assisting to prevent climate change.</p>
<p>Describe any likely impacts on the Natura 2000 site as a whole in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interference with the key relationships that define the structure of the site;</li> <li>Interference with the key relationships</li> </ul>	<p><b>Interference with key relationships that define the structure of the site:</b> Given the distance between the proposal area and the SAC there will be no direct relationship with the site. No logical pathways exist between the SAC and the proposal site at Skelmersdale.</p> <p><b>Interference with key relationships that define the function of the site:</b> The development of Skelmersdale Town Centre will not impact on the key function of the dune system on the Sefton Coast.</p>

<p>that define the function of the site.</p>	
<p>Describe any likely impacts on the Natura 2000 site(s) in the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Short term;</li> <li>▪ Medium term; and</li> <li>▪ Long term.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Short-term Impacts:</u></b> No likely impacts on this site in the short term.  <b><u>Medium-term Impacts:</u></b> No likely impacts on this site in the medium term.  <b><u>Long-term Impacts:</u></b> No likely impacts on this site in the long term.</p>
<p>Provide any indicators of significance as a result of the identification of effect set out above in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss;</li> <li>• Fragmentation;</li> <li>• Disruption;</li> <li>• Disturbance;</li> <li>• Change to key elements of the site (e.g. water quality etc).</li> </ul>	<p>As it has been identified that there will be no effect to the Natura 2000 site then no indicators are provided.</p>
<p>Describe from the above those elements of the project or plan, or combination of elements, where the above impacts are likely to be significant or where the scale or magnitude of impacts is not known.</p>	<p>As stated earlier, this SPD elaborates on planning guidance set out within Policy DE11 of the West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan 2001 – 2016 which allocates land in Skelmersdale Town Centre for the development of Town Centre Uses. The Regional Spatial Strategy Policy RDF1 identifies Skelmersdale as a Regional Town in the North West, encouraging development that will support urban regeneration and economic growth.</p> <p>There are a number of Supplementary Planning Guidance Documents, which refer to small sites within Skelmersdale and potential future development, but these are small in scale and it is not considered that the development of these sites, plus the town centre site will result in any detrimental impact on the Natura 2000 site.</p> <p>Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council has prepared an SPG entitled 'Southport Seafront' which refers to the regeneration of the promenade area of the town. This area is situated in close proximity to the SAC but it is not considered that the development proposals as set out for Skelmersdale will, in-combination, cause any greater impacts on the SAC.</p> <p>No other large scale plans / programme and policies are known in other neighbouring authorities, which would have a cumulative detrimental affect on the Natura 2000 site.</p>

# Screening Assessment Criteria – Dee Estuary

Describe the individual elements of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) likely to give rise to impacts on the Natura 2000 site(s).

## Background to the SPD

- The Skelmersdale Town Centre SPD provides guidance on the regeneration of Skelmersdale Town Centre; the main thrust of the SPD is to develop a new high street linking the Concourse Centre and Asda. This will include a variety of retail, leisure, office and residential uses. The town centre core will also include a range of new community facilities such as a library, sports centre and ecumenical centre. All new development will be built to the highest standard of design and will be a massive investment into the town. Surrounding this will be other new uses including residential housing, improvements to the wooded Cloughs in terms of both their environmental and recreational value. Road links and pedestrian / cycling facilities will be improved around the town centre area. The new uses within the town centre will create new jobs and training opportunities for local people.
- The wooded Cloughs, which are locally important, are to be enhanced, both environmentally but also to provide a valued recreational resource for the residents and visitors to the town. Improvement management plans will be put in place to ensure that these areas are effectively managed to maximise protection and enhancement on these areas.

## Scope of the SPD

- The Skelmersdale Town Centre SPD will not have a direct impact on the Dee Estuary SAC, as the guidance will only apply to Skelmersdale Town Centre, which is not adjacent to or close proximity of, the Special Area of Conservation.

## Supporting Guidance

- The guidance in the SPD elaborates on existing planning guidance found within Policy DE11 of the West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan (WLRLP), which allocates the site for future development connected with the regeneration of the town centre. The WLRLP was formally adopted as the Development Plan for the District in July 2006.

## Geographical Location

- As highlighted in figure 3 of the Screening Report, Skelmersdale is located to the South East of the West Lancashire District area, with the Dee Estuary situated 41km to the South West and it is considered that there is a significant geographical gap between the two areas, meaning that the potential for direct impacts on the Natura 2000 is considered to be not significant. It should be noted that the Dee Estuary is not located within the West Lancashire local authority boundary, but is within Flintshire (Sir y Fflint), Cheshire and Wirral local authority area. These are not adjoining authorities to West Lancashire.

## Key Features of the Natura 2000 site and Potential Impacts

- The Dee Estuary SAC has a European Designation primarily for its range of bird species and the habitat it provides. The proposal does not identify and direct impacts in terms of loss of species and loss of habitat at the Dee Estuary SAC. However there are a number of in-direct impacts that should be considered as a result of the proposals.

## Direct Impacts on Natura 2000 site

- It is not considered that there will be any detrimental impact to the Natura 2000 site from these proposals, given the geographical distance between the proposal site in Skelmersdale and the SAC.

## In-Direct Impacts and Pathways

- The development of Skelmersdale Town Centre will place extra demand on resources such as mains water, the majority of mains water is provided from groundwater sources in the local Bickerstaffe Aquifer, however an element of Skelmersdale's water needs is sourced from the Dee Estuary. Therefore this has been acknowledged as a potential pathway.
- Following discussions with United Utilities it is considered that the level of need for mains water will put undue pressure on the water resources of the Dee

	<p>Estuary. It has also been made clear that United Utilities are in the process of preparing more boreholes in the Bickerstaffe Aquifer, thus further reducing any requirements for water from the Dee Estuary. It is therefore considered that no significant in-direct impacts will exist in terms of water requirements from the Dee Estuary.</p> <p><u>Other Plans and Projects</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Dee Estuary SAC is protected by a range of policies including Policy NC2 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan that protects sites of international environmental importance and Policy WB2 of the Flintshire Unitary Development Plan that both seek to protect sites of international environmental importance. The SPA is also located within an area of significantly high flood risk which also places it's own restrictions on the type of development that can take place in this locality</li> <li>▪ As part of the future planning application process the applicant will be required to undertake a full Environmental Impact Assessment, which will include assessments relating to ecology, landscape and water quality issues.</li> </ul>
<p>Describe any likely direct, indirect or secondary impacts of the project (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) on the Natura 2000 sites by virtue of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Size and scale;</li> <li>• Land-take;</li> <li>• Distance from the Natura 2000 site or key features of the site;</li> <li>• Resource requirements (water abstraction etc.);</li> <li>• Emissions (disposal to land, water or air);</li> <li>• Excavation requirements;</li> <li>• Duration of construction, operation, decommissioning etc;</li> <li>• Other.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Size and Scale:</u></b> The SPD will only apply to a specific area of the District, that being Skelmersdale Town Centre (for definition of boundaries please see figure 2).</p> <p><b><u>Land-take:</u></b> The SPD refers a specific area of land allocated by Policy DE11 of the West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan. The SPD does not propose to develop land within, or adjacent to this Natura 2000 site.</p> <p><b><u>Distance from the Natura 2000 site or Key Features:</u></b> The site is approximately 41km from Skelmersdale Town Centre.</p> <p><b><u>Resource Requirements:</u></b> New development of residential and commercial resources will create a further demand for utilities such as water and power, the development of the town centre will also create a demand for raw materials in the construction process. After discussions with United Utilities it is understood that a proportion of the water comes from the Dee Estuary but that Skelmersdale is well sourced from local aquifers in Bickerstaffe, further boreholes are currently being prepared in the Bickerstaffe Aquifer that will further reduce any requirement for water from the Dee Estuary.</p> <p><b><u>Emissions:</u></b> Emissions to air will be present through the construction period of the town centre, but careful control and management of such emissions will ensure that no impacts are felt either in the locality of the Skelmersdale Town Centre nor at this Natura 2000 site, either directly or in-directly. Emissions to water through surface run off will also have to be closely controlled through the use of Sustainable Drainage systems and the promotion of impermeable surfaces. Again such features will ensure that no impacts are felt at this site, either directly or indirectly.</p> <p><b><u>Excavation Requirements:</u></b> There will not any significant requirements for excavation work as a result of this SPD above any normal foundation works. It is hoped that the existing ground levels can be used to the advantage of the development.</p> <p><b><u>Transport Requirements:</u></b> The SPD does not introduce any further requirements for resources.</p> <p><b><u>Duration of Construction, Operation etc.:</u></b> The development is likely to be undertaken in a phased approach with development likely to continue over a 10 – 15 year period. Once construction is completed the operation of the town centre will be ongoing.</p>
<p>Describe and likely changes to the site arising as a result of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction of habitat area;</li> <li>• Disturbance to key species;</li> <li>• Habitat or species fragmentation;</li> <li>• Reduction in species density;</li> <li>• Changes in key indicators of conservation value (water quality etc);</li> <li>• Climate change.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Reduction of habitat area:</u></b> The implementation of this guidance will not result in a physical reduction in the area of habitat of the SAC.</p> <p><b><u>Disturbance to key species:</u></b> Implementation of this guidance should not result in the disturbance to key species within the SAC.</p> <p><b><u>Habitat or Species Fragmentation:</u></b> Implementation of guidance in the SPD will not result in habitat or species fragmentation of the SAC.</p> <p><b><u>Reduction in species density:</u></b> Implementation of guidance in the SPD will not result in a reduction of species density within the SAC.</p> <p><b><u>Changes in key indicators:</u></b> Implementation of guidance in the SPD will not result in changes to key indicators to the SAC.</p> <p><b><u>Climate Change:</u></b> The SPD is encouraging towards the use of renewable energies within new development and high standard of design to be included; this can only act as a positive role in assisting to prevent climate change.</p>
<p>Describe any likely impacts on the Natura 2000 site</p>	<p><b><u>Interference with key relationships that define the structure of the site:</u></b> Given the distance between the proposal area and the SAC there will be no direct</p>

<p>as a whole in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interference with the key relationships that define the structure of the site;</li> <li>• Interference with the key relationships that define the function of the site.</li> </ul>	<p>relationship with the site. No logical pathways exist between the SAC and the proposal site at Skelmersdale.</p> <p><b><u>Interference with key relationships that define the function of the site:</u></b> The development of Skelmersdale Town Centre will not impact on the key function of the dune system on the Sefton Coast.</p>
<p>Describe any likely impacts on the Natura 2000 site(s) in the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Short term;</li> <li>▪ Medium term; and</li> <li>▪ Long term.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Short-term Impacts:</u></b> No likely impacts on this site in the short term.</p> <p><b><u>Medium-term Impacts:</u></b> No likely impacts on this site in the medium term.</p> <p><b><u>Long-term Impacts:</u></b> No likely impacts on this site in the long term.</p>
<p>Provide any indicators of significance as a result of the identification of effect set out above in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss;</li> <li>• Fragmentation;</li> <li>• Disruption;</li> <li>• Disturbance;</li> <li>• Change to key elements of the site (e.g. water quality etc).</li> </ul>	<p>As it has been identified that there will be no effect to the Natura 2000 site then no indicators are provided.</p>
<p>Describe from the above those elements of the project or plan, or combination of elements, where the above impacts are likely to be significant or where the scale or magnitude of impacts is not known.</p>	<p>As stated earlier, this SPD elaborates on planning guidance set out within Policy DE11 of the West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan 2001 – 2016 which allocates land in Skelmersdale Town Centre for the development of Town Centre Uses. The Regional Spatial Strategy Policy RDF1 identifies Skelmersdale as a Regional Town in the North West, encouraging development that will support urban regeneration and economic growth.</p> <p>There are a number of Supplementary Planning Guidance Documents, which refer to small sites within Skelmersdale and potential future development, but these are small in scale and it is not considered that the development of these sites, plus the town centre site will result in any detrimental impact on the Natura 2000 site.</p> <p>No other large scale plans / programme and policies are known in other neighbouring authorities, which would have a cumulative detrimental affect on the Natura 2000 site.</p>