WEST LANCASHIRE LOCAL PLAN 2023-2040

SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL
'REGULATION 18' ISSUES AND OPTIONS
October 2021

Heidi McDougall BSc (Hons) MBA
Corporate Director of Place and Community

Directorate of Place and Community
West Lancashire Borough Council
52 Derby St, Ormskirk, Lancashire, L39 2DF

Contents

The Appendices to this Sustainability Appraisal Report are provided separately.

1. Introduction

1.1 Report Structure

1.1.1 This report forms the interim Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for the Issues and Options stage of the West Lancashire Local Plan 2023-2040.

1.1.2 The Local Plan 2023-2040 will eventually supersede the current adopted West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027 as the adopted development plan for the Borough. The two main purposes of this interim SA / SEA are to help inform the preparation of the Local Plan, and to enable people to participate in the consultation on the Local Plan: Issues and Options, by providing an assessment of the strategic development options and policy options against the SA Framework set out in this document. This allows the Council and the public to identify the potential social, economic and environmental effects of the Local Plan 2023-2040.

1.1.3 This Sustainability Appraisal Report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 1 sets out the legal requirements for SA / SEA and summarises the SA process and how it relates to plan-making; it goes on to describe the Borough of West Lancashire from a sustainability point of view, outlines the reasons for, and nature of the Local Plan, and summarises work done to date on the SA Scoping Report and the establishment of an SA Framework for the Local Plan, including the 13 sustainability objectives and the 11 Topic (thematic) Areas.

- Chapter 2 considers the 10 overarching objectives of the draft Local Plan 2040, and how they relate to the 13 sustainability objectives against which the document is being appraised.

- Chapter 3 summarises the SA of the policy options.

- Chapter 4 explains how to comment on this SA, through the Local Plan consultation, and what the next stages are.

1.1.4 The full SA tables of the 40 different sets of policy options are provided separately in the Appendices to this document.
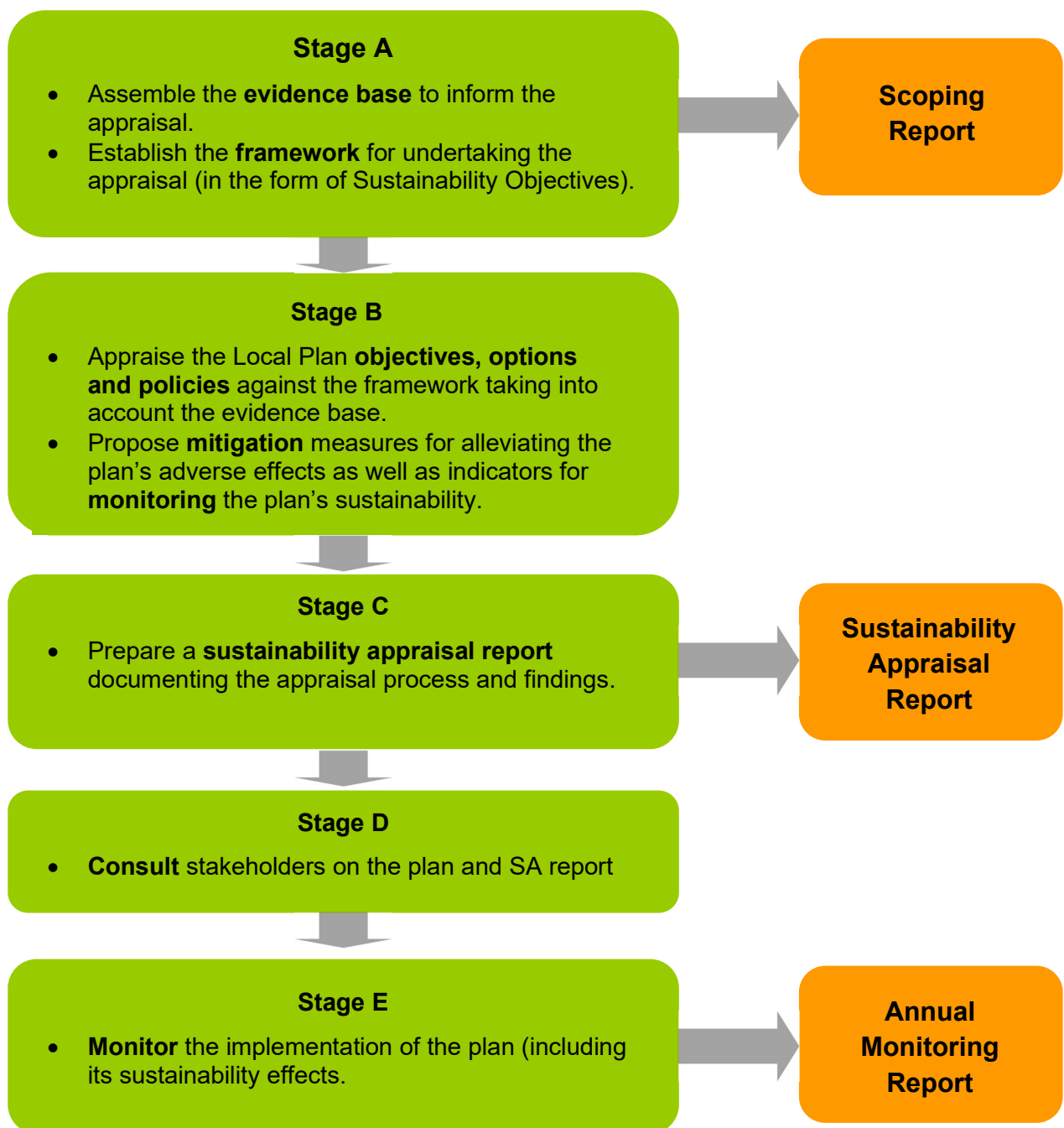
1.2   Requirement for Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment

1.2.1   Under Section 39(2) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, SA is mandatory for new or revised development plan documents.

1.2.2   Alongside this requirement, the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 ('the 2004 Regulations') set a statutory requirement for local authorities to carry out an SEA of all planning and land use documents.

1.2.3   The 2004 Regulations transpose into UK law the requirements of the EU SEA Directive (Directive 2001/42/EC on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment).

1.2.4   The government's preferred approach is to combine the requirement to prepare an SEA and an SA into one unified assessment process that considers economic, social, and environmental effects. National Planning Practice Guidance, published by the government, set out how local planning authorities should undertake SA of local plans[1].

The SA Process

1.2.5   The SA process essentially has five stages, as set out in Figure 1.1 overleaf

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[1] http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/strategic-environmental-assessment-and-sustainability-appraisal/sustainability-appraisal-requirements-for-local-plans/

Figure 1.1: Five-stage approach to SA

Stage A

- Assemble the **evidence base** to inform the appraisal.
- Establish the **framework** for undertaking the appraisal (in the form of Sustainability Objectives).

Scoping Report

Stage B

- Appraise the Local Plan **objectives, options and policies** against the framework taking into account the evidence base.
- Propose **mitigation** measures for alleviating the plan's adverse effects as well as indicators for **monitoring** the plan's sustainability.

Stage C

- Prepare a **sustainability appraisal report** documenting the appraisal process and findings.

Sustainability Appraisal Report

Stage D

- **Consult** stakeholders on the plan and SA report

Stage E

- **Monitor** the implementation of the plan (including its sustainability effects).
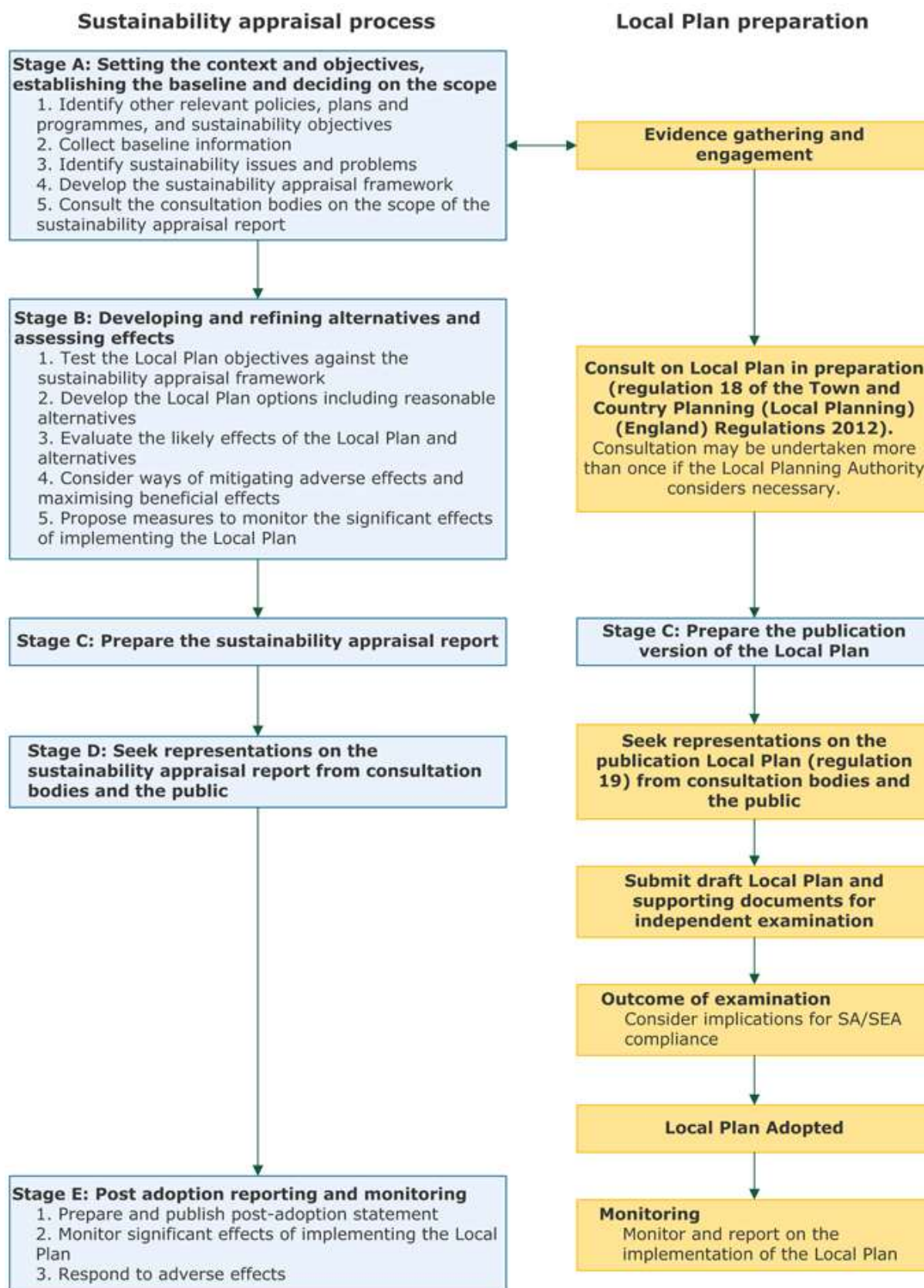
Annual Monitoring Report

1.2.6   At the initial **Stage A** in the SA process, the framework for undertaking the appraisal of the emerging Local Plan is developed. Generally this requires the collation of an evidence base to provide an initial, or 'baseline' set of statistics (including trends), identification of issues arising from the baseline information, and the generation of a set of sustainability objectives to, among other things, address the issues. The SA framework and a summary of the evidence base are presented in the SA 'Scoping Report' which has undergone consultation with statutory consultees, namely Historic England, Natural England and the Environment Agency.

1.2.7   The SA Scoping Report for the West Lancashire Local Plan 2023-2040 was prepared in summer 2021 by Council Officers. The baseline data is contained in a set of Thematic Spatial Evidence Papers ('TSEPs'), produced separately from, but summarised in, the SA Scoping Report. These TSEPs are available on the Council's website[2].

1.2.8   Following consultation with the statutory consultees, and in the light of comments received, parts of the SA Scoping Report were amended. These amendments included minor changes to the proposed sustainability objectives and indicators.

1.2.9   **Stage B** in the SA process is the appraisal itself. This is an iterative process which requires the prediction and evaluation of the potential effects of the different strategic and policy-related options compared to the 'baseline' position. The possibility of mitigation measures and how they influence the likely effects of policies are also taken into account.

1.2.10   **Stage C** in the SA process involves documenting the appraisal and preparing the SA Report (this incorporates the material required for inclusion in the Environmental Report under the SEA Directive). Following public consultation (Stage D) the SA Report may require updating to reflect changes made to the emerging Local Plan in response to representations. Stage E concerns ongoing monitoring of significant effects.

1.2.11   Under the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, there is no specific requirement for the preparation of, or public consultation upon, either an "Issues and Options" or "Preferred Options" version of an emerging local plan document[3]. However, in order to give West Lancashire stakeholders the opportunity to participate as fully as possible in planning for their area, and to choose the best strategy for the future development of the Borough, it is proposed to publicly consult on the "Issues and Options" stage in preparing the Local Plan 2040.

1.2.12   This SA report of the Issues and Options version of the emerging Local Plan may be considered an "Interim SA Report" for the Local Plan. To ensure that the eventual strategy to be set out in the Local Plan for the future development of the Borough will be a sustainable form of development, and to provide a robust consideration of alternatives to the eventual proposals or policies chosen, a SA is being undertaken of the Local Plan Issues and Options documents.

1.2.13   Figure 1.2 below illustrates how the SA is an integral part of the local plan preparation process and should be undertaken in parallel with it.

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[2] To see the TSEPs, follow links from https://www.westlancs.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/the-local-plan/the-local-plan-2023-2040/evidence-base.aspx
[3] Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. Regulation 18 requires that consultation be undertaken on the scope of a local plan document, and Regulation 19 requires that the document be published for consultation before being submitted to the Secretary of State, but there is no specific mention of an "Options" or "Preferred Options" stage.

Figure 1.2   The SA process and Local Plan preparation

Sustainability appraisal process

Stage A: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope
1. Identify other relevant policies, plans and programmes, and sustainability objectives
2. Collect baseline information
3. Identify sustainability issues and problems
4. Develop the sustainability appraisal framework
5. Consult the consultation bodies on the scope of the sustainability appraisal report

Stage B: Developing and refining alternatives and assessing effects
1. Test the Local Plan objectives against the sustainability appraisal framework
2. Develop the Local Plan options including reasonable alternatives
3. Evaluate the likely effects of the Local Plan and alternatives
4. Consider ways of mitigating adverse effects and maximising beneficial effects
5. Propose measures to monitor the significant effects of implementing the Local Plan

Stage C: Prepare the sustainability appraisal report

Stage D: Seek representations on the sustainability appraisal report from consultation bodies and the public

Stage E: Post adoption reporting and monitoring
1. Prepare and publish post-adoption statement
2. Monitor significant effects of implementing the Local Plan
3. Respond to adverse effects

Local Plan preparation

Evidence gathering and engagement

Consult on Local Plan in preparation (regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012). Consultation may be undertaken more than once if the Local Planning Authority considers necessary.

Stage C: Prepare the publication version of the Local Plan

Seek representations on the publication Local Plan (regulation 19) from consultation bodies and the public

Submit draft Local Plan and supporting documents for independent examination

Outcome of examination Consider implications for SA/SEA compliance

Local Plan Adopted

Monitoring Monitor and report on the implementation of the Local Plan

Source: National Planning Practice Guidance, DCLG 2014

Requirements of the SEA Directive

1.2.14   In preparing a new or revised Development Plan Document (DPD), West Lancashire Council must conduct an environmental assessment in accordance with the requirements of the European Directive 2001/42/EC on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment ('the SEA Directive').

1.2.15   The SEA Directive requires that the following matters be considered in assessments:

- Biodiversity
- Population
- Human Health
- Fauna
- Flora
- Soil
- Water
- Air
- Climatic Factors
- Material Assets
- Cultural Heritage – including archaeological, architectural heritage
- Landscape

1.2.16   There are two facets to the appraisal of a DPD: an appraisal of the DPD objectives (optional) and iterative appraisals of the DPD content – the options put forward during consultation, the preferred options chosen and, any additional options in the submission DPD. Consideration should also be given to mitigation and enhancement measures for alleviating adverse effects and maximising positive effects, as well as potential indicators for monitoring the plan's sustainability.

1.2.17   The SEA Directive and the 2004 Environmental Assessment Regulations require the public and the SEA Consultation Bodies to be given "an early and effective opportunity within appropriate time frames" to express their opinions on the draft local plan and the accompanying environmental report. When consulting on the emerging Local Plan, the local planning authority must also invite comments on the accompanying SA report.

1.2.18   Whilst this 'interim' SA does not meet all the requirements of an 'environmental report' (SEA Regulations), it provides helpful background information and context for the preparation of the SA Report which will be prepared alongside the Publication version of the Local Plan. Should there by any significant changes to the Publication version before it is submitted, a further SA Report will be required to accompany the Submission version of the Local Plan.

1.2.19   (Note that there is also expected to be another 'Regulation 18' consultation stage, currently planned for autumn 2022, looking at housing and employment land requirements and proposed site allocations. This stage will also involve SA.)

1.3 Characteristics of West Lancashire

1.3.1 This section provides a brief description of West Lancashire, in particular its sustainability (environmental, social and economic) characteristics. A fuller 'spatial portrait' of the Borough is available as part of the Local Plan: Issues and Options suite of documents.

1.3.2 West Lancashire Borough lies at the northern extremity of the Liverpool City Region and is adjacent to the Greater Manchester and Central Lancashire City Regions to the east and north respectively. The Borough has a population of approximately 114,000, and an area of 380km^2 (147 square miles).

Economic characteristics

1.3.3 West Lancashire benefits from its location close to the northern edge of the Liverpool urban area with good road and rail links into the city. There are also close links with Southport, Wigan and Preston. Much of the Borough has reasonable access to the motorway network, and there are rail links to Preston and Manchester.

1.3.4 Employment in the Borough is varied, including services, professional occupations, agriculture and horticulture, and, as with other areas, a declining manufacturing base. The Borough has a number of industrial estates, particularly in Skelmersdale and Burscough. Economic activity rates are healthy, and unemployment is generally lower than average.

1.3.5 Whilst Ormskirk functions as the administrative centre of the Borough, with its historic town centre and twice-weekly market, Skelmersdale (in planning terms) is the highest ranked town centre in the local settlement hierarchy. In 2019, work commenced on the regeneration of the Town Centre, including the delivery of new retail units in the town centre.

1.3.6 Edge Hill University, located on the edge of Ormskirk, has seen significant growth since 2000 and is a successful university and a significant contributor to the local economy. However, local graduate retention rates are lower than desired.

Environmental characteristics

1.3.7 In general terms, the west, south and north west of the Borough comprises flat, fertile land, mainly in intensive agricultural or horticultural use. In the east and north east of the Borough lies more undulating wooded and / or pastoral land. The northern boundary of West Lancashire comprises the Ribble Estuary, an internationally important nature conservation site, forming part of a route for many migrating birds in autumn and winter. To the west of Burscough lies Martin Mere, another internationally important wetland site (and also a tourist attraction). The northern 'finger' of Sefton Borough lies to the west of West Lancashire and contains several miles of coastline with more internationally and / or nationally important habitats, including sand dunes, dune heath, woodland, and the Alt Estuary.

1.3.8 A large part of West Lancashire contains safeguarded mineral deposits; in addition, there are extensive areas of deep peat, typically on the western edge and at the

south east of the Borough. Over 90% of West Lancashire is designated as Green Belt, thereby constraining development. The Borough contains a very high proportion of the North West's Grade 1 agricultural land.

1.3.9   Carbon dioxide emissions in West Lancashire are high in comparison to other Lancashire authorities and the rate for tonnes (of CO_2) per person is above the national level. Emissions are greatest from transport, industry/land use, and domestic energy. Energy consumption is high, against ever-increasing (carbon based) energy costs, with the risk of many residents being in 'fuel poverty' and/or suffering further climate injustices (e.g. social heat vulnerability). With national targets to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050, action is needed at a local level to reduce the Borough's emissions, improve energy efficiency, and promote renewable energy with further opportunities to develop a green economy. As the climate changes, a range of species may shift northwards, and an ecological network of habitats and corridors, allowing the movement of species, will be increasingly important.

Social characteristics

1.3.10   West Lancashire is generally perceived as an attractive place to live, with several very affluent areas. As with other areas, house prices have risen significantly since 2000 and affordability of housing is a pressing issue. Crime rates for most types of crime are generally low and have decreased over recent years. The population is increasing slowly but steadily, and its composition is changing with the proportion of elderly people growing and projected to continue rising significantly, whilst the economically active population is projected to comprise an ever-decreasing proportion of the overall population.

1.3.11   Nationally, the Borough is ranked right in the middle in terms of the "Indices of Multiple Deprivation". However, this general ranking hides significant disparities between different parts of the Borough, with many parts of Skelmersdale experiencing below average educational attainment, employment prospects, health, income and housing quality. However, Skelmersdale has a number of advantages, including plenty of open space and greenery, and a congestion-free road system.

1.4 West Lancashire Local Plan 2040

1.4.1 The West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027 ('the WLLP'), adopted October 2013, has been reviewed (autumn 2019) and several of its policies found to need updating. The Council commenced work on a new Local Plan in autumn 2019. Work was then suspended in September 2020 because of the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on Council resources. In March 2021, the Council's Cabinet gave the go-ahead for work to recommence. The Local Plan 2040 will cover all topics relevant for inclusion in a local plan for West Lancashire Borough, and should be adopted in 2024, three years before the 'expiry' date of the existing WLLP, to ensure a Local Plan remains effective within the Borough

1.4.2 The NPPF advises that a typical local plan period should be at least 15 years, and that when the release of Green Belt is involved, sufficient Green Belt land be released (and safeguarded) to meet development needs beyond the plan period, in order to avoid the need to further amend the Green Belt at the next iteration of the local plan. The new Local Plan will run 2023 to 2040 (a 17-year period) and, through its preparation, will consider whether Green Belt release is required.

Preparing the Local Plan

1.4.3 Consistent with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012, there are several stages involved in the preparation of the Local Plan:

- Development of the Evidence Base

The evidence base required for a local plan is extensive and splits into several topic areas. There are also over-arching themes which are often not specific to planning and cut across several topic areas, for example the themes of an ageing population, health, and the climate emergency. The evidence base is being prepared and updated on an ongoing basis, some work being carried out by Council officers, some by external consultants or other bodies with specific expertise.

- Scoping, Issues & Options stage (Regulation 18)

Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2020 essentially requires that, when preparing a new Local Plan, the Council must consult on the "subject" of a Local Plan that it is proposing to prepare and what it "ought to contain" (referred to as the 'scope'). The Regulation 18 consultation will identify the key issues the Council believes the Local Plan needs to address, options for how planning policies might address those issues, and an indication of the Council's preferred option for the approach planning policies in the Local Plan might take to deal with each of those issues (based on the best available evidence and best practice at that time).

- Development requirements and site allocations (Regulation 18)

Following consultation on the Issues and Options, a separate, and additional, public consultation will be undertaken on the proposed development requirements for the Borough for the Plan period, and the proposed site allocations necessary to meet those development requirements. Essentially, this will, based on evidence, propose the amount of development required for the Plan period and where it will be located within the Borough. This consultation will be an additional consultation under

Regulation 18, to enable specific engagement on the Council's consideration of development needs and site allocations before it finalises the Local Plan document it wants to publish before submitting for Examination.

- Publication (Regulation 19) and Submission (Regulation 22)

Following consideration of representations received at the initial Regulation 18 consultation, and the additional consultation on development requirements and site allocations, the Council will prepare the new Local Plan document. This will include a series of planning policies, site allocations and a policies map. This version of the Local Plan is known as the 'Pre-Submission', 'Publication', or 'final draft'. The 'Pre-Submission' document is then published (the Publication stage) to give stakeholders a final chance to make formal representations on its content. These representations are then submitted (the Submission stage), alongside the Local Plan and necessary accompanying documentation, to the Secretary of State for examination.

- Examination (Regulation 24) and Adoption (Regulation 26)

Once the Local Plan is submitted, it is then in the hands of the Planning Inspectorate to appoint an independent Inspector to undertake an examination in public of the document. Following the examination hearing sessions, and consideration of all the evidence and representations submitted, the Inspector will write a report concluding whether or not the Local Plan is sound, and outlining any changes (modifications) that are necessary to make the plan sound. It may be necessary to carry out a public consultation exercise on proposed modifications to the Local Plan document, in particular if the modifications materially change policies of the document.

Once found sound, the Local Plan can be adopted by the Council.

1.4.4   The planned timetable for the preparation of the West Lancashire Local Plan is set out in the Council's Local Development Scheme, available online by following links from https://www.westlancs.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy.aspx.

Structure of the Local Plan Issues and Options Documents (anything else needed?)

1.4.5   The Issues and Options document (actually a suite of documents in order to improve public accessibility) comprises the following elements:

- *Portrait of West Lancashire* – a description of the Borough and its constituent settlements and areas.

- *Vision* – a description of how we would like West Lancashire to be by 2040

- *Objectives and Indicators* **–** what the plan aims to achieve, and how we will measure performance against those aims

- *Strategic Policy Options* – for policies focused on overarching strategy, including sustainable development, settlement boundaries and climate change and environmental sustainability. (This section of the Plan will also include housing and employment land requirements, distribution of development around the Borough, and any strategic development sites, but these items are not known or decided at this stage of preparing the Plan.)

- *Housing and Communities Policy Options* - for policies including housing needs, place-making, heritage and community facilities.

- *Economy and Employment Policy Options* - for policies including employment sites, the rural economy, town and village centres and education and skills.

- *Environment and Health Policy Options* - for policies including the natural environment, nature conservation sites, and the built environment.

- *Transport and Infrastructure Policy Options* – for policies including transport networks, car parking standards, electric vehicle charging, digital connectivity, low carbon and renewable energy, energy efficiency and water efficiency.

- *Other Policy Options* – for policies on sequential tests, viability and developer contributions.

1.5 The Local Plan SA Scoping Report

1.5.1 During Spring 2021, an SA Scoping Report was prepared and consulted upon with statutory consultees. This report covered 11 'thematic topic areas', addressing different aspects of 'sustainability'. For each topic area, the Scoping Report considered:

- Relevant plans and strategies (international / national / regional / sub-regional / local levels) – their main points of relevance, and how they relate to, or may influence, the Local Plan. Some plans and strategies (for example, the National Planning Policy Framework) cover more than one topic.

- The local context in terms of the topic in question – effectively a brief summary of the latest evidence on that particular topic. The evidence base is itself set out and / or summarised in two sets of topic papers, one set covering specific themes, for example transport, and one set covering the different geographical areas of West Lancashire. These thematic and spatial evidence papers ('TSEP') are available on the Council's website.

- What the likely situation would be without the implementation of new Local Plan policies or proposals. This analysis, along with the local context, forms part of the 'baseline position' for the Borough.

- Sustainability-related issues in West Lancashire relating to the topic in question, in the light of what is set out in the evidence base. These issues have been used to determine a set of sustainability objectives (whose purpose is to address the issues), each including locally distinctive sub-criteria.

- The sustainability objectives, their sub-criteria, and a series of corresponding proposed indicators, together form the proposed SA framework for the Local Plan 2040.

1.5.2 This Scoping Report effectively fulfils Stage A of the SA process (Fig.1.2), as follows:

A1: Identifying other relevant policies, plans and programmes, and sustainability objectives.	These are identified on a topic-by-topic basis through the Report.
A2: Collecting baseline information.	This baseline information is drawn primarily from a series of topic and place-based evidence papers prepared by the Council.
A3: Identifying sustainability issues and problems.	The issues arise from consideration of the evidence papers, and are set out in detail, as well as summarised in the Scoping Report.

A4: Developing the SA framework.	The Scoping Report sets out objectives arising from, and seeking to address, the identified issues; it also suggests indicators for each objective – this is effectively the SA framework.
A5: Consulting the consultation bodies on the scope of the SA.	The views of statutory consultees were sought in a 5-week consultation in spring 2021.

1.5.3   The Scoping Report was consulted upon in April/May 2021. Comments were received from Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency. Lancashire County Council's Public Health Team were invited to comment but were unable to do so due to their resources, understandably, still being focused on the Covid-19 pandemic. This consultation resulted in a number of minor amendments being made to the Scoping Report, which are detailed in an accompanying feedback report. The Scoping Report and the Thematic Spatial Evidence Papers ('topic papers') are available on the Council's website at:

https://www.westlancs.gov.uk/lp2040

1.6 The Local Plan 2040 Sustainability Appraisal Framework

1.6.1 The table on the following pages sets out the proposed framework upon which the Sustainability Appraisal of the Local Plan will be based – the 13 broad objectives, locally-distinctive sub-criteria, and indicators. The sub-criteria provide more detail as to how the SA Objectives might be achieved, and how a particular policy may be assessed against the objectives.

1.6.2 The indicators are drawn from various sources, most notably the authority's Annual Monitoring Report. In choosing the indicators, consideration has been given to whether the data is readily available (at West Lancashire level, and updated sufficiently regularly), what the data demonstrates, and how well this relates to the objective in question.

1.6.3 Consultation on the SA Scoping Report led to minor tweaks to the wording of some objectives, to their sub-criteria, and to their proposed indicators. Full details of changes to the report are available on the Council's website:

https://www.westlancs.gov.uk/lp2040

Table 1   Sustainability Appraisal Framework for the Local Plan 2040 – Objectives, Sub-Criteria, and Indicators

Objective	Locally distinctive sub-criteria	Indicators
1. To cater for the needs of an ageing population.	• Will the plan / policy facilitate the provision of accommodation suitable for (designed or adaptable for) the elderly? • Will the plan / policy facilitate the provision of infrastructure / services for the elderly? • Will the plan / policy make it easier for the elderly to find appropriate employment or activities in which to participate?	• Number / percentage of residential developments (>15 units) requiring specialist accommodation for the elderly; • No. of specialist housing units for the elderly completed; • No. of Class C2 dwellings completed / granted permission.
2. To reduce Borough-wide inequalities with regard to learning, skills, educational attainment, and employability.	• Will the plan / policy increase the levels of participation and attainment in education? • Will the plan / policy address skills gaps and enable skills progression? • Will the plan / policy help develop the Borough's knowledge base? • Will the plan / policy improve people's chances of success in applying for jobs?	• GCSE attainment amongst WL pupils; • % of the population educated to degree level or higher; • % of the population with no qualifications / Levels 1-4; • % of Job Seekers Allowance Claimants.
3. To improve health and well-being and reduce inequalities	• Will the plan / policy improve economic, environmental and social conditions (quality of life) in deprived areas and for deprived groups? • Will the plan / policy reduce isolation in the community? • Will the plan / policy reduce levels of crime and / or the fear of crime? • Will the plan / policy reduce health inequalities? • Will the plan / policy provide opportunities to protect or enhance areas of public open and recreational space, and Green Infrastructure, so to support opportunities for physical and mental health improvement? • Will the plan / policy facilitate or encourage healthier lifestyles? Will the plan / policy improve the quantity and quality of, and access to, areas of open and recreational space, and to Green Infrastructure in general? • Will the plan / policy increase opportunities for active travel (cycling/walking)?	• Loss of any publicly accessible green / open space; • Serious acquisitive crime rates; • Mortality rates (male and female); • Life expectancy at birth / at age 65; • % of the population whose health is considered 'good'; • % of the population with limiting long term illness; • No. people attending health, wellbeing and sports activities and courses (gym & weight referrals, health walk attendance) • Percentage of physically inactive adults • Percentage of Year 6 children classified as overweight or obese • Length of new cycleways and other 'greenways' (Linear Parks, etc.) provided / improved.

Objective	Locally distinctive sub-criteria	Indicators
4. To reduce economic inactivity and disparities in employment.	• Will the plan / policy provide job opportunities in all areas, including most needy areas? • Will the plan / policy encourage business start-ups, especially from under-represented groups? • Will the plan / policy provide a broad range of jobs and employment opportunities? • Will the plan / policy provide higher skilled jobs? • Will the plan / policy improve accessibility to jobs via the location of employment sites?	• % of people employed; • % of population living in workless households; • Average incomes and earnings; • % of the working age population economically active / inactive or employed / unemployed. • Business counts • Employee jobs • Job densities
5. To encourage sustainable economic growth.	• Will the plan / policy help attract workers, residents, businesses and / or investors to the Borough? • Will the plan / policy improve the range of sustainable employment sites? • Will the plan / policy promote growth in the key sectors of the Borough's economy? • Will the plan / policy enable the Borough to take advantage of major investment nearby? • Will the plan / policy deliver regeneration to / promote the economic growth of urban areas and the vitality / viability of town centres? • Will the plan / policy increase the economic benefit derived from the Borough's natural environment?	• Land / floorspace take-up for employment purposes; • Loss of employment land (designated or otherwise); • % of units in retail/town centre uses within Town Centres; • % of town centre ground floor units which are vacant; • Amount (floorspace) of commercial, office, retail and leisure developed in / out of town centres.
6. To facilitate diversification of the rural economy.	• Will the plan / policy support sustainable rural diversification? • Will the plan / policy encourage and support the growth of sustainable rural businesses? • Will the plan / policy retain or promote access to and provision of services in rural areas? • Will the plan / policy promote the sustainable economic growth of villages and smaller settlements?	• No. of business start-ups • Amount of new employment floorspace created in rural areas

Objective	Locally distinctive sub-criteria	Indicators
7. To seek to meet the housing needs of all sections of society.	- Will the plan / policy provide for an appropriate mix of housing to meet all needs including affordable housing and / or housing for the elderly? - Will the plan / policy support the creation of sustainable settlements with an appropriate balance of residents? - Will the plan / policy support the provision of 'non-mainstream' housing e.g. gypsy and traveller sites, other caravan dwellers, houseboats, student accommodation?	- Housing completions against Local Plan targets; - Number / % of vacant dwellings; - Number of demolitions; - Number / % affordable housing permissions / completions; - Average house price (or ratio of lower quartile price : salary); - No. of authorised pitches / plots provided for Travellers; - Amount of student accommodation provided.
8. To contribute towards an efficient, equitable, safe, and environmentally 'sustainable' transport system / network.	- Will the plan / policy improve the efficiency of the transport network? - Will the plan / policy help reduce vehicular traffic and congestion? - Will the plan / policy increase access to and opportunities for walking, cycling ('active travel') and use of public transport? - Will the plan / policy reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on the roads? - Will the plan / policy reduce or minimise emissions of greenhouse gases? - Will the plan / policy help improve air quality? - Will the plan / policy promote the use of locally produced or sourced goods and materials?	- Length of new cycleways and other 'greenways' (Linear Parks, etc.) provided / improved; - Average distance travelled to work; - Mode of transport to work; % of new development granted permission / completed within 400m of a bus stop or 800m of a railway station; - Proportion of new housing within 1km of 5 basic services. - Air quality / number of areas of AQMA
9. To preserve and enhance the Borough's land resources.	- Will the plan / policy reduce the amount of vacant, derelict, and contaminated land? - Will the plan / policy encourage the use of brownfield land in preference to greenfield land? - Will the plan / policy minimise or reduce the loss of high quality (best and most versatile) agricultural land and / or soil in general? - Will the plan / policy achieve the efficient use of land via appropriate density of development? - Will the plan / policy reduce the amount of waste generated by development? - Will the plan / policy promote the use of recycled, reclaimed and secondary materials?	% of new dwellings granted permission / completed on previously developed land; - Density of new residential development; - Area of brownfield land developed for housing / employment / retail; - Area of prime agricultural land lost to development; % of waste going to landfill / recycled.

Objective	Locally distinctive sub-criteria	Indicators
10. To conserve, and, where possible, enhance, and to recognise the added value of, the built and cultural heritage and environment of the Borough.	• Will the plan / policy improve the quality of the built and historic environment? • Will the plan / policy support the conservation and enhancement of high quality built, natural and historic environments within the Borough (whether designated or not)? • Will the plan / policy protect and enhance the character and appearance of the Borough's landscape, strengthening local distinctiveness and sense of place? • Will the plan / policy improve access to / understanding of buildings and other assets of historic and cultural value?	• Number of heritage assets lost / 'at risk'; • Number of Listed Buildings on 'At Risk Register'. • Number of locally listed heritage assets.
11. To minimise contributions towards climate change, mitigate the impacts of climate change, and protect against flood risk.	• Will the plan / policy minimise the need for carbon-based energy generation / use? • Will the plan / policy maximise the production / deployment of renewable energy? • Will the plan / policy encourage new developments to achieve zero carbon? • Will the plan / policy help reduce or manage flood risk? • Will the plan / policy help improve resilience to the likely effects of climate change?	• SAP rating of local authority-owned (and other) dwellings; • Renewable energy developments granted permission (number / type / capacity); • Number of new dwellings achieving zero carbon • Number of new commercial dwellings achieving BREEAM or comparable standards • Annual incidents of flooding within the Borough; • Number of planning applications allowed contrary to EA / LLFA advice on flood risk. • Number of planning applications granted in Flood Zones 2/3, where considered appropriate by the EA / LLFA / Decision makers • Number of new trees planted
12. To protect 'water assets' and ensure an adequate supply of water and means of disposing of wastewater.	• Will the plan / policy help improve the quality of water resources in the area? • Will the plan / policy maintain / enhance ground water (incl. aquifer) quality? • Will the plan / policy help, or minimise effects upon, water supply? • Will the plan / policy minimise / reduce the amount of wastewater generated by development?	• % of watercourse length within the Borough with good to fair water quality.

Objective	Locally distinctive sub-criteria	Indicators
13. To protect, maintain and enhance the biodiversity assets of the Borough.	- Will the plan / policy protect and / or enhance the biodiversity or geodiversity of the Borough? - Will the plan / policy protect and / or enhance habitats, species and damaged sites? - Will the plan / policy provide opportunities for new habitat creation? - Will the plan / policy protect and / or extend habitat connectivity and landscape permeability, suitable for species migration?	- Number of Section 106 Agreements to mitigate harm to biodiversity; - Number of sites protected for their environmental / biodiversity / geodiversity value within the Borough. % of SSSIs (by area) in favourable / recovering condition; % of planning applications approved on an SSSI / BHS; - The number of protected sites that have been lost or damaged due to development. - Number / % of sites delivering biodiversity net gain - Hectares of biodiversity habitat delivered through strategic site allocations - Percentage of planning approvals, likely to have an impact on wildlife, where the Council negotiated provisions for a net gain in biodiversity - Number of planning applications refused or withdrawn in part due to their lack of consideration of biodiversity impacts - Number of planning applications which secure / achieve biodiversity net gain

1.7   Sustainability Appraisal Topic Areas

1.7.1   In preparing the evidence base for the Local Plan, Thematic & Spatial Evidence Papers ('TSEPs') were prepared on 11 different subjects (themes). From these TSEPs, sustainability-related issues affecting West Lancashire were identified, and from the issues, 13 sustainability-related objectives were drawn up. These 13 objectives, along with their locally distinctive sub-criteria and proposed indicators, form the framework for the SA of the Local Plan (Section 1.6).

1.7.2   Table 1.2 below shows how the Local Plan evidence base topic areas cover the matters set out in the SEA Directive. The 11 TSEPs cover the SEA Directive topics and others besides.

Table 1.2   Relationship between SEA Directive topics and WLBC topic papers

SEA Directive topic	Local Plan TSEP covering this topic
a) Biodiversity	10. Biodiversity
b) Population	1. Population and social inclusion
c) Human Health	1. Population and social inclusion
d) Fauna	10. Biodiversity
e) Flora	10. Biodiversity
f) Soil	5. Land resources
g) Water	8. Water quality and resources
h) Air	9. Air quality
i) Climatic Factors	7. Climate change, energy and flooding
j) Material Assets	2. Housing; 3. Local economy and employment; 4. Transport; 11. Local services and community infrastructure
k) Cultural Heritage – including archaeological, architectural heritage	6. Cultural heritage and landscape
l) Landscape	6. Cultural heritage and landscape

1.7.3   Table 1.3 overleaf shows how the Sustainability Objectives in the SA Framework link to the TSEPs and also to the SEA Directive topics. Some links are indirect (and 'material assets' is taken to include housing, employment sites, and 'hard' infrastructure such as roads and schools).

Table 1.3   Relationship between Sustainability Objectives and TSEP / SEA Directive topics

SA objective (Local Plan)	Link with LPR TSEP	Link with SEA Directive topic
1. To cater for the needs of an ageing population.	TSEP1	b) Population c) Human health
2. To reduce Borough-wide inequalities with regard to learning, skills, educational attainment, and employability.	TSEP1	c) Human health (indirect link)
3. To improve health and well-being and reduce inequalities.	TSEP1	c) Human health
4. To reduce economic inactivity and disparities in employment.	TSEP1, 3	j) Material assets (indirect link)
5. To encourage sustainable economic growth.	TSEP3	j) Material assets (indirect link)
6. To facilitate diversification of the rural economy.	TSEP3 (and 1)	j) Material assets (indirect link)
7. To seek to meet the housing needs of all sections of society.	TSEP2	j) Material assets (indirect link)
8. To contribute towards an efficient, equitable, safe, and environmentally 'sustainable' transport system / network.	TSEP4, 9	h) Air quality j) Material assets (indirect link)
9. To preserve and enhance the Borough's land resources.	TSEP5	f) Soil l) Landscape
10. To preserve, and, where possible, enhance, and to recognise the added value of the built and cultural heritage and environment of the Borough.	TSEP5	k) Cultural heritage
11. To minimise contributions towards climate change, to mitigate the impacts of climate change, and protect against flood risk.	TSEP7	i) Climatic factors
12.To protect 'water assets' and ensure an adequate supply of water and means of disposing of wastewater.	TSEP8	g) Water
13. To protect, maintain and enhance the biodiversity assets of the Borough.	TSEP10	a) Biodiversity d) Fauna e) Flora

1.7.4   Table 1.4 below groups the 13 SA Objectives into 11 topic areas (which are actually the same as the TSEP topics). The sustainability of the policy options in the emerging Local Plan will be assessed using these topic areas in this order, rather than the SA Objectives in their order. A table of the 11 topic areas and their locally distinctive sub-criteria is provided in the appendices to this report.

Table 1.4   SA Topic Areas and their relationship with SA Scoping Objectives

SA Topic Area	SA Scoping Objective
1. Population and social inclusion	1. To cater for the needs of an ageing population. 2. To reduce Borough-wide inequalities with regard to learning, skills, educational attainment, and employability. 3. To improve health and well-being and reduce inequalities.
2. Housing	7. To seek to meet the housing needs of all sections of society.
3. Local economy and employment	4. To reduce economic inactivity and disparities in employment. 5. To encourage sustainable economic growth. 6. To facilitate diversification of the rural economy.
4. Transport	8. To contribute towards an efficient, equitable, and environmentally 'sustainable' transport system / network.
5. Land resources	9. To preserve and enhance the Borough's land resources.
6. Cultural heritage and landscape	10. To preserve, and, where possible, enhance, and to recognise the added value of the built and cultural heritage and environment of the Borough (this objective includes landscape).
7. Climate change, energy and flooding	11. To minimise contributions towards climate change, to mitigate the impacts of climate change, and protect against flood risk.
8. Water quality and resources	12. To protect 'water assets' and ensure an adequate supply of water and means of disposing of wastewater.
9. Air quality	8. To contribute towards an efficient, equitable, and environmentally 'sustainable' transport system / network. (This objective covers air quality)
10. Biodiversity	13. To protect, maintain and enhance the biodiversity assets of the Borough
11. Local services and community infrastructure	3. To improve health and well-being and reduce inequalities. 8. To contribute towards an efficient, equitable, and environmentally 'sustainable' transport system / network.

2.   Assessment of Local Plan Objectives against SA Topics

2.1.1   This chapter sets out the proposed overarching (or 'strategic') objectives of the Local Plan and assesses their compatibility with the 13 SA Objectives.

2.1.2   The Local Plan Objectives are necessarily focused on matters that planning can directly influence but, where possible, they refer to the wider benefits good planning will have on other factors. The objectives must stem directly from identified issues, relate to [any combination of] the three pillars of sustainability (economic, social, environmental), and to be written in such a way that the effects of policies or proposals can be measured against them.

2.1.3   In 2015, through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the UN set 17 goals for sustainable development, which were adopted unanimously by 193 countries, including the UK, and address the three dimensions of sustainable development. Whilst it is not mandatory for Local Plans to embed these Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the NPPF (2021) (paragraph 7) does acknowledge their wider value in pursuing sustainable development to 2030. As all the SDGs directly or indirectly relate to planning, it seems appropriate to consider the SDGs through the SA Objectives. Consequently, nearly all of the UN SDGs tie in to one or more of the SA Objectives.

2.1.4   The proposed Local Plan Objectives are as follows:

- **Objective 1: Sustainable Communities**

  To ensure sustainability is a guiding principle within our communities providing a balanced mix of housing tenures and types, employment opportunities and access to services and the natural environment by adapting the principles set out within the United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda 2030.

- **Objective 2: A Healthy Population**

  To encourage the improvement of the health and wellbeing of the population of West Lancashire by encouraging a healthier lifestyle through the way that new development is planned and designed, increasing and improving the network of green spaces and Linear Parks, waterways, Sport and Recreation spaces across the Borough and improving access to health and community facilities. To tackle health inequalities, especially within young people, focusing on areas of social deprivation.

- **Objective 3: A High Quality Built Environment**

  To ensure that new development is designed to a high quality, recognising the importance of the climate emergency, reduced natural resources and pollution and the requirement to drastically reduce carbon emissions and ensuring that the Borough's historic features and their settings are conserved and enhanced.

- **Objective 4: Addressing Climate Change**

  To work proactively towards making a meaningful contribution to meeting greenhouse gas reduction / zero net carbon targets, including by encouraging Renewable Energy and low carbon development (e.g. Solar, Onshore and Offshore Wind, Ground and Air source heat technologies, localised district energy schemes) and to drive energy and water efficiency improvements in new buildings.

- **Objective 5: Reduced Inequality**

  To plan for new development and improved infrastructure in ways which reduce inequality by addressing areas of identified and hidden deprivation across the Borough, seeking to address inequality to the most disadvantaged members of our communities and encourage strong community cohesion and diversity.

- **Objective 6: The Right Mix of Housing**

  To provide a wide range of housing types and tenures in appropriate locations to meet the needs of West Lancashire's growing population, including affordable housing, accommodation for older people, student accommodation, houses of multiple occupation, gypsy and travellers and residential caravans and house boats.

- **Objective 7: A Vitalized Economy**

  To provide opportunities for appropriate new developments that will see the Borough play an increased role within the three City Regions by encouraging businesses to establish themselves in West Lancashire.

- **Objective 8: Vibrant Town and Village Centres**

  To enable the Borough's Town and Village Centres to establish themselves and evolve to meet the aspirations of the ambitious West Lancashire Vision and so build on the vitality and vibrancy so valued at the heart of each community.

- **Objective 9: Accessible Services**

  To enable, encourage and plan for greater connectivity to a wide range of services to all parts of the Borough with an emphasis in providing ways of moving across the Borough as an alternative to car travel, making appropriate provision, or re-provision, of new facilities in the most accessible locations and locating development in accessible and sustainable locations.

- **Objective 10: A Natural Environment**

  To improve and make the most of our "green" Borough by protecting and enhancing the natural environment, including biodiversity and a network of green spaces, waterways and connecting Linear Parks, facilitating the visitor economy, supporting the agricultural and horticultural industries and generally enabling rural communities to thrive.

2.1.5   Table 2.1 below compares the 10 Local Plan Objectives with the 13 SA Objectives, putting a **Y** where the two objectives are consistent. It can be seen that each Local Plan Objective is consistent with at least one SA Objective, and that each SA Objective covers at least one Local Plan Objective. This implies that, as a whole, the overarching / 'strategic' Local Plan Objectives address the SA framework.

2.1.6   Table 2.1 also shows that a number of the Local Plan Objectives each address several SA objectives, for example those relating to a vitalised economy, reduced inequality, and a natural environment. This reflects the implicit consideration given to the economic, social and environmental tenets of sustainability in the Local Plan.

Table 2.1   Assessment of Proposed Local Plan Objectives against the Sustainability Appraisal Objectives

SA Objective \ Local Plan Objective	1: Sustainable communities	2: A healthy population	3: A high quality built environment	4: Addressing climate change	5: Reduced inequality	6: The right mix of housing	7: A vitalised economy	8: Vibrant town and village centres	9: Accessible services	10: A natural environment
1 To cater for the needs of an ageing population	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y				
2 To reduce Borough-wide inequalities with regard to learning, skills, educational attainment, and employability	Y				Y					
3 To improve health and well-being and reduce inequalities	Y	Y		Y	Y				Y	
4 To reduce economic inactivity and disparities in employment	Y				Y		Y		Y	
5 To encourage sustainable economic growth	Y			Y			Y	Y	Y	
6 To facilitate diversification of the rural economy							Y	Y	Y	Y
7 To seek to meet the housing needs of all sections of society	Y			Y	Y	Y				
8 To contribute towards an efficient, equitable, safe & environmentally sustainable transport system / network	Y			Y					Y	
9 To preserve and enhance the Borough's land resources			Y	Y						Y
10 To preserve & where possible enhance, and to recognise the added value of the built and cultural heritage and environment of the Borough			Y	Y						Y

Local Plan Objective SA Objective	1: Sustainable communities	2: A healthy population	3: A high quality built environment	4: Addressing climate change	5: Reduced inequality	6: The right mix of housing	7: A vitalised economy	8: Vibrant town and village centres	9: Accessible services	10: A natural environment
11 To minimise contributions towards climate change, to mitigate the impacts of climate change & protect against flood risk		Y	Y	Y	Y					Y
12 To protect 'water assets' & ensure an adequate supply of water and means of disposing of wastewater			Y	Y						Y
13 To protect, maintain and enhance the biodiversity assets of the Borough.	Y	Y		Y						Y

3.   Sustainability Appraisal of Local Plan Policy Options

3.1.1   This chapter presents the findings of the sustainability appraisals of each of the policy options for the West Lancashire Local Plan, having been assessed against the Framework outlined in Section 1.6 above. Policy options are grouped across six themes:

- **Strategic**
    - ST01 - Sustainable Development
    - *ST02a - Housing requirements**
    - *ST02b - Employment land requirements**
    - *ST02c - Spatial Distribution**
    - ST03 - Climate change and environmental sustainability
    - ST04 - Settlement boundaries
    - *ST05 - Strategic sites**

- **Housing and Communities**
    - HC01a – Where housing can be located
    - HC01b – Using land efficiently – (i) brownfield development & (ii) density
    - HC01c – Dwelling sizes
    - HC01d – Affordable housing
    - HC01e – Housing for older people
    - HC01f – Custom and self-build housing
    - HC01g – Accommodation for students
    - HC01h – Caravan and houseboat dwellers
    - HC01i – Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Show People
    - HC01j – Temporary agricultural workers dwellings
    - HC02 – Place-making
    - HC03 – Heritage
    - HC04 – Community Facilities

- **Economy and Employment**
    - EE01 – Employment Areas
    - EE02 – Rural economy
    - EE03 – Town Centres
    - EE04a – Education / Edge Hill University
    - EE04b – Education / Skills and training

- **Environment and Health**
    - EH01 – Preserving and enhancing the Borough's nature
    - EC02 – Landscape and land resources
    - EH03 – Flood risk and water resources
    - EH04 – Contamination and pollution
    - EH05 – Air quality
    - EH06 – Green infrastructure and open spaces (4 approaches)
    - EH07 – Healthy eating and drinking

- **Transport and Infrastructure**

- o TI01 – Transport network and access
- o TI02 – Parking standards and electric vehicle charging points
- o TI03 – Digital connectivity
- o TI04 – Low carbon and renewable energy
- o TI05 – Energy efficiency in new developments
- o TI06 – Water efficiency in new residential developments

- **Other**
  - o OT01 – Sequential tests
  - o OT02 – Viability
  - o OT03 – Developer contributions

* These have been identified as being necessary strategic policies in the emerging Local Plan. However, evidence in relation to housing and employment development needs is still being finalised at the point of preparing this Sustainability Appraisal, and, until that evidence is completed, options cannot be prepared nor subsequently appraised in terms of their sustainability. It is anticipated that these strategic policies will be included in the next stage of the Local Plan process, as we identify development needs and strategic development sites, and be accompanied by a sustainability appraisal at that time.

3.1.2   All of the policy options are listed below, along with a summary of the conclusions from the appraisal of each option. The full appraisals of each option are set out in detail in the appendices to this SA Report. Further details on the options, and the issues to which they relate, can be found through the Local Plan Issues and Options consultation documentation.

3.1.3   Whilst this SA appraises all of the policy options to assess the most sustainable option, it may be, in practice, that ultimately that option is not the most feasible in a small number of cases – for example, it is impracticable or unviable to deliver - and therefore a 'hybrid' approach of options may be more appropriate. The SA therefore forms part of the wider iterative process of plan making, helping to identify and avoid, or mitigate, any of the more detrimental impacts whilst promoting and supporting the most sustainable approaches.

STRATEGIC POLICIES

ST01 – Delivering sustainable development

Summary of options:

1. **'Standard' settlement hierarchy and NPPF presumption** – this sets out a settlement hierarchy based on the findings of the West Lancashire Sustainable Settlement Study 2021, essentially the same as the 'baseline' hierarchy (summarised below). Most new development would be directed to the settlements at or towards the top of the hierarchy, as these tend to be the most sustainable locations for new development. The policy would also include the NPPF 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' as this is at the centre of national planning policy and is required to play a key role in local plans

2. **Variation to settlement hierarchy** – this alternative option varies the settlement hierarchy from the 2021 Study, putting some settlements with fewer services towards the top levels of the hierarchy, and some settlements with more services lower in the hierarchy.

Overview of current baseline:

- The current WLLP has a settlement hierarchy based on a previous version of the West Lancashire Sustainable Settlement Study, with Skelmersdale with Up Holland, Ormskirk with Aughton, and Burscough at the top, then Key Sustainable Villages (Tarleton with Hesketh Bank, Parbold, Banks), Rural Sustainable Villages, and Small Rural Villages at the bottom.

- The main differences between the WLLP settlement hierarchy and the 2021 Sustainable Settlement Study is that Ormskirk is in the top tier (previously second), Tarleton is in the second tier (previously third), and Banks in the fourth tier (previously third).

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal

- Option 1 is very similar to the baseline position. Overall, it would be expected that there would be no, or insignificant, effects relative to the baseline position, and whilst there could be minor positive or negative effects, the likelihood of these effects will be determined primarily by policy ST02 (distribution of development) rather than by this policy, so the overall effect is considered to be neutral relative to the baseline.

- Option 2 uses a settlement hierarchy that departs from the findings of the Sustainable Settlement Study and is most likely to have negative effects under a number of Topic Areas relative to the baseline on account of less good links to services and facilities.

- ***Overall, Option 1 is considered the more sustainable.***

ST02a – Housing requirements
ST02b – Employment land requirements
ST02c – Spatial distribution of development

Whilst we have determined policies will be required relating to housing and employment land requirements, spatial distribution of that development, and strategic sites, the actual detail of the policy options will only be developed at later stages of the Local Plan preparation process. Evidence in relation to housing and employment development needs is still being finalised at the point of preparing this Sustainability Appraisal, and, until that evidence is completed, options cannot be prepared nor subsequently appraised in terms of their sustainability. It is anticipated that these strategic policies will be included in the next stage of the Local Plan process, as we identify development needs and choose preferred development sites; these policies will be accompanied by a sustainability appraisal at that time.

ST03 – Climate change and environmental sustainability

Summary of options:

1. A new strategic policy. This approach would see the introduction of a new strategic policy governing climate change and environmental sustainability, in response to the climate emergency declaration made by the Council. It would support ambitions to achieve net zero by embedding such climate and environmental sustainability considerations at the heart of all development proposals.

2. Have no strategic policy. This approach would be similar to the current Local Plan and would have no strategic policy governing climate change and environmental sustainability.

3. Introduce a more prescriptive policy. This approach would set detailed requirements through the strategic policy.

Overview of current baseline:

- The baseline position comprises a range of adopted Local Plan Policies, the National Planning Policy Framework, National Planning Practice Guidance, Building Regulations Approved Document L (Conservation of Fuel and Power) and national legislation e.g. the Climate Change Act 2008. Relevant adopted Local Plan policies are: GN3: Criteria for Sustainable Development, IF2: Enhancing Sustainable Transport Choice, EN2: Preserving and Enhancing West Lancashire's Natural Environment, EN3: Provision of Green Infrastructure and Open Recreation Space and EN1: Low Carbon Development and Energy Infrastructure.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1 would have positive small positive effects in sustainability terms in relation to 6 topics (local economy and employment, transport, land resources, climate change / the climate emergency, energy and flooding, air quality and biodiversity).
- Option 2 has neutral effects in terms of sustainability because it represents the baseline position.
- Option 3 would have positive sustainability effects in relation to 3 topics (transport, climate change / the climate emergency and air quality) and small positive effects in relation to 6 topics (population, health and social inclusion, local economy and employment, land resources, water quality, biodiversity and local services and community infrastructure).
- None of the assessed options would have negative effects upon any topic and the quantity of positive effects are a reflection of the wide ranging nature of the policy approach and the fact that no strategic local plan policy currently exists which covers these matters.

- ***Overall, option 3 would be the most sustainable.*** However, it should be noted that, given the detailed requirements of option 3 across a range of policy areas, it would be very likely to result in a very long and complex policy. Local Plans are to be read as a whole so there would be practical advantages in providing a less detailed strategic policy, supported by a selection of more detailed policies (option 1).

ST04 – Settlement Boundaries

Summary of options:

1. A continuation of the WLLP policy GN1 approach with a slight relaxation to Protected Land policy – Within settlement boundaries, development will be permitted, subject to compliance with other Local Plan policies. Outside settlement boundaries, land will either be designated as Protected Land or Green Belt. Protected Land policy would be similar to that in WLLP GN1(b), except that more types of housing will be permitted (so that the designation is not more restrictive than a Green Belt designation). Green Belt policy would follow national policy.

2. Do away with the Protected Land designation – treat the land as greenfield sites within settlements or redesignate as Green Belt where the land is shown to fulfil at least one of the five Green Belt purposes.

3. Stronger protection for greenfield land within settlement boundaries – within settlement boundaries (on unallocated sites), a much stronger presumption in favour of brownfield land development over greenfield.

Overview of current baseline:

- The current WLLP allows for development within settlement boundaries, with a preference for brownfield development over greenfield. Protected Land is subject to restrictions on development (only affordable housing, up to 10 units), and Green Belt follows national policy.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1 is very similar to the baseline position. Overall, it would be expected that there would be no, or insignificant, effects relative to the baseline position, with one positive in relation to housing provision as a result of the slight relaxation of Protected Land policy.
- Option 2 would probably result in more housing development, so positive effects relative to the baseline in terms of housing provision, but negative effects in terms of land resources, landscape, water, and air quality.
- Option 3 would result in less housing development within settlements, but possibly more elsewhere. Its effects relative to the baseline tend to be the opposite of option 2.

- ***Overall, Option 1 is considered the most sustainable.***

ST05 – Strategic Sites

Again, as with ST02a-c, whilst we have determined policies will be required relating to housing and employment land requirements, spatial distribution of that development, and strategic sites, the actual detail of the policy options will only be developed at later stages of the Local Plan preparation process. Evidence in relation to housing and employment development needs is still being finalised at the point of preparing this Sustainability Appraisal, and, until that evidence is completed, options cannot be prepared nor subsequently appraised in terms of their sustainability. It is anticipated that these strategic policies will be included in the next stage of the Local Plan process, as we identify development needs and choose preferred development sites; these policies will be accompanied by a sustainability appraisal at that time.

HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES

HC01a – Where housing can be located

Summary of options:

1. A general policy on where housing should (and should not) be built. This would link to the first Strategic Development Policy ('Delivering Sustainable Development') but refer to residential development only.

2. Continue with the West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027 ('WLLP') current approach set out by Policy GN1 and supported by Policies SP1 and RS1.

3. Be more restrictive than under current WLLP policy set out by GN1 and supported by Policies SP1 and RS1.

4. Be less restrictive than under current WLLP policy set out by GN1 and supported by Policies SP1 and RS1.

Overview of current baseline:

- The baseline position comprises adopted Local Plan Policy GN1: Settlement Boundaries, supported by Policies SP1: A Sustainable Development Framework for West Lancashire and RS1: Residential Development. It also includes the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance, particularly in terms of how this relates to Green Belt. Option 2 therefore represents the baseline position.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1 is likely to be slightly better in terms of sustainability compared to the baseline position as it would have a positive effect in relation to the housing topic but an uncertain negative effect upon land resources.
- Option 2 represents the baseline situation so has a neutral effect in sustainability terms.
- Option 3 would have positive sustainability effects upon two topics (land resources and cultural heritage and landscape) but would have negative effects upon 3 topics (Population, Health and Social Inclusion, Housing and Local services and community infrastructure). As such, if each topic is given equal weigh this option would be a little less sustainable than the baseline.
- Option 4 would be a less restrictive approach, but in doing so, could result in more housing on Protected land, and could have more negative effects on the sustainability of land resources and landscape.

- ***As such, Option 1 would be the most sustainable.***

HC01b(i) – Using land efficiently: Brownfield vs greenfield development

Summary of options:

1. To broadly follow national policy, encouraging the residential development of brownfield sites in preference to greenfield sites wherever possible, subject to viability.

2. Have no preference for brownfield land over greenfield land development.

3. A more rigorous 'sequential' or 'phased' approach towards brownfield land development, requiring all suitable brownfield sites within a settlement to be considered for development first before development of greenfield sites, subject to viability.

Overview of current baseline:

- The baseline position comprises the National Planning Policy Framework, National Planning Practice Guidance (Effective use of land in particular) and the adopted Local Plan. In terms of the latter, relevant policies are primarily GN1: Settlement Boundaries and RS1: Residential Development; the former indicates when it may be appropriate to develop on brownfield and greenfield sites and the latter indicates appropriate densities for residential development.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1 would have neutral effects in terms of sustainability as it closely resembles the baseline position.
- Option 2 would have negative effects in relation to the population, health and social inclusion, housing, land resources and cultural heritage and landscape topics and is therefore less sustainable compared to the baseline position.
- Option 3 would have positive effects compared to the baseline in relation to the land resources and cultural heritage and landscape topics.

- ***Overall, Option 3 would be the most sustainable.***

HC01b(ii) – Using land efficiently: Housing density

Summary of options:

1. Require the same housing density for all areas, using the 'standard' minimum 30 dwellings per hectare cited in WLLP Policy RS1: Residential Development.

2. Higher densities on all sites (say a minimum site density of 35 dwellings per hectare) in order to reduce the amount of land needed for building new homes.

3. Allow / require lower density development on all sites in order to give people larger garden areas and / or more publicly accessible open space / space for nature.

Overview of current baseline:

- The baseline position comprises the National Planning Policy Framework, National Planning Practice Guidance (Effective use of land) and adopted Local Plan Policy RS1: Residential Development which indicates appropriate densities for residential development.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1 would have neutral effects in terms of sustainability as it closely resembles the baseline position.
- Option 2 would have positive effects in relation to the population, health and social inclusion, land resources and cultural heritage and landscape topics and is therefore more sustainable compared to the baseline position.
- Option 3 would have negative effects compared to the baseline in relation to the same population, health and social inclusion, land resources and cultural heritage and landscape topics and is therefore less sustainable compared to the baseline.

- ***Overall, option 2 would be the most sustainable.***

HC01c – Dwelling sizes

Summary of options:

1. Require a mix of dwelling sizes for new developments, based on the Council's evidence base

2. Exercise no control over dwelling sizes – let the developers build what they want

3. Exercise strict control over dwelling sizes – setting out the required proportions and not allowing variation apart from in exceptional circumstances

Overview of current baseline:

- There is no policy in the current WLLP governing dwelling sizes. The NPPF states that, in considering housing supply, the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies. Most new dwellings built in the Borough are 3 or 4 bedroomed (AMR 2021). Option 2 is therefore most aligned to current policy (or the absence of it) which sets no requirements in respect of dwelling sizes

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1 would provide greater control over dwelling sizes, supporting the provision of housing in relation to identified need. As a starting point for negotiation, it could help to address identified needs whilst also providing sufficient flexibility if there were other local, relevant considerations proffered by the developer. It would help provide more balanced communities by providing a greater mix of housing to address the needs of all.

- Option 2 is most aligned to current policy (or the absence of it) which sets no requirements in respect of dwelling sizes and therefore provides no control over dwelling sizes in relation to identified need. It would be expected that there would still remain an unbalanced distribution of new dwelling sizes.
- Option 3 would exercise the strictest control over dwelling sizes, which would make it difficult to respond to changing needs. For example, during COVID-19, demand for larger houses increased because people wanted additional rooms as home-office space.

- ***Overall, Option 1 is considered the most sustainable.***

HC01d – Affordable housing

Summary of options:

1. To continue to support 100% affordable housing (AH) schemes, and require a percentage of homes in developments of 10 or more dwellings be affordable

2. Go for the minimum amount of affordable housing (as national policy) so to deliver other 'benefits', e.g. green-housing, biodiversity or infrastructure

3. Go for the greatest possible amount of affordable housing at the expense of other 'good to haves'

Overview of current baseline:

- WLLP Policy RS2: To support 100% affordable housing (AH) schemes and require a percentage of homes in developments of 10 or more dwellings be affordable. Option 1 generally continues the current baseline.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal

- Option 1 is the option most aligned to current policy. It supports the provision of affordable housing, in line with national policy, so enabling people to access affordable housing which can help provide stability and support health and wellbeing. A greater range of housing opportunities better caters to the needs of the population and supports wider social inclusion.
- Option 2 would provide a minimum amount of affordable housing, which would enable fewer people to access affordable housing, but could financially open up greater opportunities for other improvements, including those to tackle the climate emergency – such as net zero homes, or energy efficiencies.
- Option 3 would pursue a maximum amount of affordable housing but at the likely expense of those other improvement opportunities, including those to tackle the climate emergency

- ***Overall, option(s) 1 and 2 are considered the most sustainable.***

HC01e – Housing for Older People

Summary of options:

1. Support the provision of accommodation for older people in appropriate and sustainable locations within settlements, requiring that new properties are accessible and adaptable, and supporting the development of care home / extra care home bedspace to meet identified needs, allocating specific sites for them where necessary.

2. Have no prescriptive policies and let the market deliver housing as it sees fit.

3. Have a more prescriptive policy to seek to achieve as much housing as possible for older people, with requirements for adaptable homes, and that a percentage of homes on large development sites be designed for older people.

Overview of current baseline:

- WLLP Policy RS1 and Policy RS2. RS1 sets that older person's accommodation will be encouraged within new settlements, and that all new homes will be expected to meet design standards. RS2 sets that in schemes of 15 or more dwellings, 20% of new residential units should be designed specifically for the elderly. Option 1 and 3 are therefore most aligned to the current baseline position.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal

- Option 1 would continue to support the provision of older people's accommodation in line with the existing baseline, but would also go further to allocate sites for care homes / extra care developments which would have a more positive effect on the provision of older peoples' housing supply.
- Option 2 would allow the market to deliver older persons housing as it sees fit, which, given the Borough's increasingly ageing population, could result in a greater amount of provision, flexible and responsive to demand. However, it could also result in less control over the amount, nature and location of that development which could have negative impacts on sustainability, accessibility and appropriate design.
- Option 3 would follow much of Option 1, but the approach would additionally seek to achieve as much housing as possible for older people. Whilst this would have the greatest positive effect on older persons housing supply, it may be too prescriptive and inflexible.

- ***Overall, option 1 is considered the most sustainable. A hybrid with option 3 may be the most sustainable approach.***

HC01f – Custom and Self-build Housing

Summary of options:

1.   A specific policy on custom and self-build (C&SB) housing

2.   Have no local policy on custom and self-build housing, leaving it to the market to deliver

Overview of current baseline:

- There is no policy in the current WLLP governing custom and self-build housing and so option 2 represents the current baseline. LPAs have a duty to give enough suitable development permissions to meet identified demand (NPPF footnote 26)

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1 is more positive towards supporting C&SB housing, enabling the LPA to meet national requirements and to provide wider housing opportunities that better supports wider social inclusion and caters to the needs of the population, whilst also facilitating better planning / use of land resources and encouraging plots to be located in the most sustainable areas close to existing services.
- Option 2 is the option most aligned to current policy (or the absence of it) which sets no requirements in respect of C&SB housing. It would not specifically help to provide C&SB housing.

- ***Overall, Option 1 is considered the most sustainable.***

HC01g – Accommodation for students

Summary of options:

1.   Continue the current approach to student HMOs. This option would involve minor alterations, including reducing the percentages of permitted HMOs permissible on most streets, with some streets set at 0% HMOs.

2.   Have a more relaxed policy approach towards student accommodation than the present WLLP.

3.   Have a tighter policy approach compared with the current WLLP, to allow no more HMOs within the Article 4 Direction area of Ormskirk / Aughton and Westhead. It would also restrict purpose-built student accommodation development on the university campus.

Overview of current baseline:

- WLLP Policy RS3 sets limits on the percentage of properties that can be HMOs in different streets and supports purpose-built student accommodation within the University Campus.

The Policy is applicable in conjunction with an Article 4 Direction relating to HMOs and covering Ormskirk and Aughton. Option 1 most closely aligns with the current baseline.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1 is most aligned to current policy (the baseline position), however it proposes minor alterations, including changes to HMO quotas. It is considered these changes would positively improve the sustainability of the policy.
- Option 2 would allow a more relaxed policy approach towards student accommodation than the current WLLP. However, it is considered that this would in negative effects with regard to services, infrastructure, housing and population when compared to the baseline.
- Option 3 restricts off campus accommodation and restricts purpose-built student accommodation to the University campus only, which would likely create a mix of positive and negative effects across the objectives.

- ***Overall, Option1 is considered the most sustainable.***

HC01h – Caravan and houseboat dwellers

Summary of options:

1. Continue with the current WLLP policy approach. i.e., support the rural economy in general, and treat proposals for expansion or enhancement of facilities on their merits, in accordance with 'the usual' policies (e.g., on Green Belt).
2. Plan positively for houseboat and residential caravan developments.
3. Plan less positively for caravan / houseboat development, restricting such uses in the Green Belt in order to preserve its openness.

Overview of current baseline:

- The existing baseline is the current WLLP policy approach. This seeks to support the rural economy in general and treat proposal for expansion or enhancement of facilities on their merits, in accordance with 'the usual' policies (e.g. on Green Belt).

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1 would seek to continue with the current WLLP policy and therefore would have a neutral effect on the existing baseline position.
- Option 2 would pro-actively ensure that there is sufficient land within close proximity to services and transport links, although this could result in a loss of land resources or impact on the landscape.
- Option 3 is a more restrictive approach and would result in a negative effect when compared to the baseline in terms of housing, the local economy and social inclusion. As a result, this is the least sustainable of the options.

- ***Overall, Option 1 would be the most sustainable option** as it continues with the existing current baseline would help support the rural economy and treats proposals for the expansion or enhancement of facilities on their merits, in accordance with other policies.*

HC01i – Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show people (GTTS)

Summary of options

1. Allocate sites in which Travellers currently occupy, or own.
2. Allocate suitable sites (including through CPO) to meet Traveller needs in areas where Traveller needs exist
3. Set aside part of new housing / employment site allocations as Traveller sites
4. Leave the matter of a Traveller site allocation to a future DPD
5. A hybrid of options 1-3

Overview of current baseline:

- There is no GTTS policy in the current Local Plan, and so guidance 'defaults' to national policy. The NPPF should be read in conjunction with the Government's planning policy for traveller sites and sets that plans should reflect the different types of housing needed for different groups including travellers.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1 is closest aligned to the current baseline position but would serve to authorise those sites – a positive effect relative to the baseline.

- Option 2 is potentially more sustainable than the baseline and GTTS site allocations would create some positive effects in relation to health, social inclusion, housing and flooding. However, much of the outcomes are linked to the location of sites, which is not known at this time. Further assessment would be needed alongside the consideration of sites.

- Option 3 compares positively to the baseline and would create some positive effects in relation to health, social inclusion, housing and flooding. However, much of the outcomes are linked to the location of sites, which is not known at this time. Further assessment would be needed alongside the consideration of sites.
- Option 4 effectively delays the identification of GTTS sites, preventing them from being considered holistically within the Local Plan. It would fail to immediately address GTTS needs and effectively 'kicks the can' further down the road.
- Option 5, a hybrid of options 1,2 and 3, is considered the most sustainable and would do the most to ensure that GTTS sites could be flexibly delivered in accordance with need, and in the most sustainable locations, creating positive effects across many of the objectives. As before, many of the outcomes are linked to the location of sites, which is not known at this time, but this option enables the most flexible approach. Further assessment would be needed alongside the consideration of sites.

- ***Overall, Option 5 is considered the most sustainable.***

HC01j – Accommodation for Temporary Agricultural Workers

Summary of options

1. Continue with a similar policy to current approach, which allows for the re-use of existing buildings, and for non-permanent accommodation (subject to certain criteria).

2. Have a more relaxed policy, allowing it in the countryside and Green Belt with minimal criteria to satisfy.

3. Have no policy at all on accommodation for temporary agricultural workers, but simply rely on national Green Belt/Countryside policy in general.

Overview of current baseline:

- WLLP Policy RS5 supports the re-use of existing buildings (in settlements and in the countryside, including the Green Belt) to accommodate temporary agricultural workers, provided it complies with other policy. It also allows for non-permanent accommodation subject to certain criteria, e.g., there exists a need, there are no existing buildings that could be used, the site is the most suitable in the area, and the impact is minimised / mitigated. Option 1 is therefore most closely aligned to the current baseline position.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1 is a continuation of current policy and therefore would have a neutral effect on the baseline position.
- Option 2 would seek to relax the existing policy on Temporary Agricultural workers accommodation which could lead to weaker control and have negative impacts on a number of the objectives.
- Option 3 would rely on National Green Belt / Countryside policy and give the Council less local control over accommodation for temporary agricultural workers, which would likely create negative effects on sustainability when compared to the current baseline.

- ***Overall, Option 1 is considered to be the most sustainable approach.***

HC02 – Place-making

Summary of options:

1. A set of principles for good 'place-making' that should be followed wherever possible, both for new ('greenfield / large empty site) development, and for schemes within existing built-up areas or settlements.

2. Have no Place Making policy.

3. Have site-specific development briefs.

4. Have a stronger policy.

Overview of current baseline:

- In the absence of an existing WLLP Policy, the current baseline is the NPPF, Chapter 12- Achieving well-designed places. It places the onus on the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places being fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. It should create better places in which to live and work and help make development acceptable to communities.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1 would be the most sustainable option as it would promote good, sustainable design for development across the borough and would result in positive impacts for the majority of the objectives.
- Option 2 would seek to continue to follow the existing National Policy approach and therefore would have a neutral effect on the existing baseline position.
- Option 3 would be delivered in a site-specific manner therefore the positive benefits would not be felt borough wide, and so it is not the most sustainable of the options.
- Option 4 is a stronger policy and so in principle could deliver the largest benefits to sustainability. However, a stricter policy could potentially stifle development due to being overly restrictive.

- ***Overall, Option 1 is considered the most sustainable.***

HC03 – Preserving and utilising our heritage

Summary of options:

1.   A policy to preserve and enhance the Borough's cultural and heritage assets

2.   Do not have a heritage policy (rely on national policy)

3.   Have a very prescriptive policy

Overview of current baseline:

- The NPPF sets out the importance of conserving the historic environment. WLLP Policy EN4 then locally guides the preservation and enhancement West Lancashire's cultural and heritage assets.   Option 1 therefore represents the current baseline position.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1 is the option most aligned to the current policy, and would just continue the baseline approach to preserve and enhance the Borough's cultural and heritage assets
- Option 2 would remove a local policy to rely solely on national policy to protect the historic environment from inappropriate development. This may allow more varied development, which could detrimentally affect the Borough's historic and cultural environment.
- Option 3 would lead to tighter, more prescriptive control over cultural and heritage assets, compared to the current baseline, but would lead to a more inflexible approach. This can often make it harder to preserve or enhance cultural and heritage assets.

- ***Overall, Option 1 is considered the most sustainable.***

HC04 – Community facilities

Summary of options:

1.   A flexible approach to maintain some control over community facilities. This would let the market and community decide what facilities should be delivered and where but would have measures to help control the unnecessary loss of services.

2.   Guide development in relation to specific development sites or infrastructure types. This would set out in detail which community facilities should be provided or protected in different locations across the Borough.

3.   Do nothing to control the provision or loss of community facilities and rely on national policy instead.

Overview of current baseline:

- The baseline is represented by two Local Plan policies and the NPPF. Local Plan Policies IF1 and IF3 deal with community facilities. IF1 indicates that the loss of such facilities within centres will be resisted unless the facility is no longer needed, or the services provided by it can be served in a suitably accessible alternative location. Policy IF3 deals with community facilities more generally in terms of both new provision and their loss (including open space). Loss will be resisted unless it can be shown that the facility is no longer needed or can be relocated to an equally accessible location. The NPPF is also relevant and indicates that community facilities should be positively planned for and their unnecessary loss resisted. It also states that they should be retained to support the rural economy.

- Whilst none of the policy options exactly reflect the baseline position, option 1 represents the closest to it.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1 closely resembles the baseline situation so would have a neutral effect overall in relation to sustainability.
- Option 2 is more detailed and geographically focused, and would have positive effects in relation to population, health and social inclusion, local economy and employment and local services and community infrastructure topics. However, it would be more inflexible to changing / future needs of communities and market demand.
- Option 3 proposes no policy, instead relying upon national planning advice and market forces, so is inferior to the baseline as it could be expected to act on a more piecemeal basis. As such, negative effects have been identified in relation to the population, health and social inclusion, local economy and employment and local services and community infrastructure topics.

- ***On balance, Options 1 is considered the most sustainable because of its flexibility to future changing demands.***

ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

EE01 – Employment Areas

Summary of options:

1.   Update and amend the existing policy. Reduce the number of existing 'core / traditional' employment areas. Identify business sectors that it would be desirable for the Borough to diversify towards. Outside the 'core' employment areas, allow a wider range of commercial uses in line with changes to the national Use Classes Order, e.g. shops. Set out when these areas could be redeveloped for non-commercial uses e.g. housing. (Additional employment areas for the new Local Plan period would be allocated under a different policy.)

2.   Update the existing policy in a limited way to reflect the new amount of land needed for employment uses over the Local Plan period, as well as changes to the Use Classes Order.

3.   Zone areas for a wide range of economic activities. Within these zones, there would be limited planning controls in order to encourage business growth akin to the former national Enterprise Zones.

Overview of current baseline:

- WLLP Policy EC1 sets out how much employment land is to be provided and designates three types of employment land around West Lancashire, affording to each varying levels of protection. National policy is set out in the NPPF and the recently revised Use Classes Order, allowing more flexibility in changing between certain employment uses and other commercial uses.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1 is judged to have no net effect relative to the baseline position. This is because it either carries on with the current Local Plan approach, or else makes changes that are in line with national policy. The current Local Plan and national policy represent the baseline.
- Option 2 is also judged to have no net effect relative to the baseline position for similar reasons to Option 1.
- Option 3 could have positive effects relative to the baseline position on three of the sustainability appraisal 'topic areas' but these depend on the location of the 'Zones' being in appropriate places and the occupants of the 'Zones' moving into the Borough from outside, rather than relocating within the Borough.

- ***Overall, if these criteria were met, Option 3 could be considered the most sustainable; otherwise all options are similar to the baseline position.***

EE02 – Rural Economy

Summary of options:

1. This option would be a little less restrictive than existing Local Plan policy. It would promote the protection of the countryside; would seek to protect viable existing rural employment, agricultural, tourist and visitor uses; 'employment uses' definition would include all job-creating uses. There would be specific rural development site allocation(s). Expansion / diversification of rural businesses would be encouraged at an appropriate scale. Development of best quality agricultural land would only be permitted where absolutely necessary.

2. Continue with existing Local Plan policy, i.e. protect the best quality agricultural land, protect existing rural employment sites and re-use existing buildings where they would be left vacant; allow rural business growth in certain circumstances; promote tourism of an appropriate scale.

3. Increased development in rural areas. This would entail the allocation of a greater quantity of land in rural areas for employment purposes. This may provide new opportunities for agricultural produce packing and distribution facilities and / or for rural technology hubs. It would support visitor attractions and larger scale commercial uses, for example larger farm shops.

Overview of current baseline:

*   As per Option 2 above, WLLP policy EC2 protects the best quality agricultural land and existing rural employment sites; it allows for re-use of existing buildings where they would be left vacant; it allows for rural business growth in certain circumstances; it promotes tourism of an appropriate scale. National policy is set out in the NPPF and further clarification provided in Planning Practice Guidance.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

*   Option 1 is similar to current policy (and therefore the baseline position), although it allows for a wider variety of employment uses in rural areas which could result in more jobs and an improvement in the rural economy.
*   Option 2 represents a continuation of current policy, and thus a continuation of the baseline position.
*   Option 3 allocates more land for rural employment and should have economic and possibly minor (social) benefits compared to the baseline but could also result in environmental disbenefits.

*   ***Overall, Option 1 is considered the most sustainable*** *given its expected positive effects and lack of negative effects compared to the baseline position, although option 3 could also be considered sustainable if negative effects are avoided (e.g. by allocating the extra sites on non-sensitive brownfield land).*

EE03 – Town Centres

Summary of options:

1. One overarching policy for centres, with additional supporting policies / strategies for Burscough, Ormskirk and Skelmersdale centres. The overarching policy would include the centre hierarchy, the requirements for sequential and impact assessments, the approach towards deciding uses that would be permitted in centres, and when new stand-alone local convenience stores would be permitted. Development will need to be of an appropriate scale to the centre to which they relate and there would be a focus upon Skelmersdale to support the regeneration of the town. The policy would have local interpretations of the sequential approach and retail impact with minor variations from the national norm.

    Proposals for new uses within centres would be considered in relation to their contribution towards commercial activity including having a pedestrian level shop front, being open for at least part of the day and whether the use would be one typically found in a town centre, etc.

    A healthy eating and drinking policy would be separate from this policy.

2. Minimal changes to WLLP policy IF1: a single policy for all town centres; minimum amendments to IF1, i.e. the removal of the requirement for a minimum of 70% retail uses within primary shopping areas of town centres due to changes to the Use Classes Order. The policy would deal with the centre hierarchy, the requirements for sequential and impact assessments, and permitted uses in centres.

3. One single general policy (similar to the preferred approach) in relation to centres and appropriate uses but no additional and separate policies for Burscough, Ormskirk, and Skelmersdale town centres.

4. One overarching policy in relation to centres and appropriate uses with additional supporting policies for Burscough, Ormskirk and Skelmersdale town centres, but without a separate healthy eating and drinking policy - these matters (as much as they could be) would be dealt with through this town centre policy (meaning that matters such as distance of takeaways from schools wouldn't be dealt with).

Overview of current baseline:

*   The baseline policy position comprises WLLP policy IF1: Maintaining Vibrant Town and Local Centres, and national policy, which includes recent amendments to the Use Classes Order and permitted development rights. The general situation has been affected by Covid-19 and the accelerated growth in online retailing.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

*   Option 1, which covers similar matters to current Local Plan policy IF1 and which is consistent with national policy (i.e. the baseline position), represents no change overall with regard to the baseline position. It scores positively against some sub-criteria, as does the baseline position.

- Option 2 also represents no change overall with regard to the baseline position, given its similarity to current WLLP policy IF1.
- Option 3 has a couple of minor negative effects compared to the baseline on account of there being no Skelmersdale, Ormskirk or Burscough-specific policy, which could result in less regeneration of Skelmersdale town centre, or a narrower distribution of services.
- Options 3 and 4 have no policy for distance of take-away from schools (outside town centres), which would represent a negative effect relative to the baseline as far as health is concerned for areas outside of town centres, but a positive effect for town centre areas.

- ***Overall, option 1 is considered the most sustainable***, *having no negative effects relative to the baseline position, followed by option 2.*

EE04a – Skills and Education

Summary of options:

1. Support the continued development and improvement of Edge Hill University campus and its facilities, including new purpose-built student residential accommodation. Any growth beyond the existing campus would be either close by to the south of St Helens Road or within Ormskirk town centre. Require travel plans and parking strategies. to encourage sustainable travel, improve access to the campus and alleviate existing or new traffic impacts. Encourage links between the University and local businesses (information sharing and learning programmes) and seek benefits to more deprived local communities.

   (HMOs and off-campus student accommodation would be dealt with separately under the Housing topic.)

2. Have no policy for the University campus. The future development of the University would not be guided by a site-specific policy meaning that such development may be more likely to take place away from the existing campus. Future development on campus may also be less able to be managed in terms of mix and quality.

3. A more detailed policy or masterplan for the University campus. This would tightly control what is developed on-campus and where. This may reduce the flexibility for the University to respond to changing demands within the higher education sector.

4. A different location for the expansion of the University campus - a satellite campus elsewhere in Ormskirk or further afield in West Lancashire rather than expanding within or close to the existing campus. It would create additional movement of students between the main campus and satellite campus and would be less likely to provide as much purpose-built student accommodation thus resulting in student housing pressures in Ormskirk.

5. A policy to deal with the future of Edge Hill University and other education sites (schools, higher / further education). The policy would expand to provide a broad policy framework for their future development. This would be challenging both in terms of the scope of which education facilities to include or exclude and the flexibility a policy framework would require in order to deal with a range of different sites effectively.

Overview of current baseline:

- The current Local Plan has a policy on Edge Hill University ('EHU'), supporting its growth within the Campus and allocating former Green Belt land for expansion (now developed). It seeks 'where possible' to ensure the University's benefits are future growth are directed to communities where educational attainment is lower.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1 would be likely to have positive effects in terms of benefits to the local economy and jobs, but negative effects in terms of land (especially if the campus were to expand to agricultural land south of St Helens Road) and transport.
- Option 2 would have a mixture of negative and uncertain effects, as it would not be known how and where the University may seek to expand.
- Option 3 would have fewer negative effects as development on the University campus would be strictly controlled, but there would be no positive economic effects as the future growth and development of the University would be constrained.
- Option 4 would have a mixture of positive effects (spreading of economic benefits beyond Ormskirk) and negative effects (accommodation pressures and transport issues) as well as uncertainty – it would depend on the location of any satellite campus.
- Option 5 should have positive economic effects and should generally avoid negative effects relative to the baseline. There is uncertainty relating to what the framework would be for Edge Hill University under this option – effects would be as per options 1-3.

- ***Overall, option(s) 1 and 5 are considered the most sustainable,*** *depending on whether Edge Hill University expands in Ormskirk (more sustainable) or onto greenfield land (less sustainable).*

EE04b – Skills and training

Summary of options:

1. A skills and training policy. The employment of local people and use of local businesses during the construction and implementation stages of major development proposals would be promoted. Planning applications for major development would be expected to produce an employment and skills plan identifying opportunities for the employment and up-skilling of local people during the implementation phase. This policy would apply to schools, further education, and higher education.

2. Have no skills and training policy.

Overview of current baseline:

- The current Local Plan and its accompanying SPDs have no skills and training policy. The NPPF does not mention skills and training. Any skills and training provided are not as a result of planning policy.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1, having a skills and education policy, would provide social and economic sustainability benefits in terms of improving people's skills and possibly qualifications, and helping employment prospects compared to the baseline position, which has no such policy (the same as option 2).

- ***Option 1 is therefore clearly the more sustainable option.***

ENVIRONMENTAL AND HEALTH POLICIES

EH01 – Preserving and enhancing the Borough's nature

Summary of options:

1. Continue the current approach of WLLP Policy EN2, but include new requirement in relation to a 10% BNG

2. Continue the current approach of WLLP Policy EN2, but include new requirement in relation to a 20% BNG

3. Continue the current approach of WLLP Policy EN2, but with a 'banded' BNG requirement – for example, 10% in urban areas and 20% in areas with more diverse wildlife

4. Create a separate, specific Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) policy (could be weaker or stronger than 10%). This would likely set out the details through a Supplementary Planning Document.

Overview of current baseline:

- The draft Environment Bill, expected to be enacted later in 2021, will require a minimum net gain in biodiversity of 10% for new development. Essentially, biodiversity net gain (BNG) could be dealt with as a new stand-alone policy or incorporated into a wider natural environment policy. Currently the baseline position is the NPPF, which sets out the importance of achieving environmental sustainability, including improving biodiversity and net gain, and WLLP Policy EN2: Preserving and enhancing West Lancashire's Natural Environment – which includes reference to nature conservation sites, priority species and habitats, trees and landscaping, land resources, coastal zones and landscape character.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal

- Option 1 is the option most aligned to the baseline / current policy but would introduce the (emerging) national BNG requirement of 10%. The importance of increasing biodiversity is well-established, and the introduction of biodiversity net gain is a positive, sustainable step in addition to the existing baseline and/or continued policy.
- Option 2 would introduce a BNG requirement of 20%, above the national requirement. This would work to improve biodiversity beyond Government targets, which is an admirable and ambitious approach. However, increasing requirements could render some sites unviable making it harder to deliver wider improvements (i.e. it would be better to have some improvement than no improvements).
- Option 3 would be the most flexible approach, requiring a minimum of 10% but up to 20% on sites with more diverse wildlife, and is essentially a hybrid of options 1 and 2. It would be the most flexible approach to improving biodiversity in the Borough but would require the most substantial evidence base in order consider viability and identify clear boundaries for the banded requirements.
- Option 4 would create a specific BNG policy, supported by an SPD. It would be a more prescriptive approach and could help secure more BNG than that at present, potentially above the national 10%, with a figure, and all other requirements, determined based on gathered evidence.

- ***Overall, option 3 is considered to be the most sustainable and flexible approach but is subject to the availability of sufficiently detailed evidence to identify clear boundaries for banded requirements***. *The remaining options are also subject to evidence relating to viability and biodiversity.*

EH02 – Landscape and land resources

Summary of options:

1. Continue the approach of WLLP Policy EN2: Preserving and Enhancing West Lancashire's Natural Environment, including Parts 4 (Land Resources), 5 (Coastal Zone) and 6 (Landscape Character).

2. Continue with existing policy but remove the Coastal Zone designation from both the Local Plan Policies Map and the policy. i.e. remove Part 5 of the existing Local Plan Policy EN2.

3. A less restrictive approach than existing Local plan Policy EN2.

4. A more prescriptive approach than existing Local Plan Policy EN2.

Overview of current baseline:

- The existing approach of EN2 has a restrictive approach to new development taking place on the best quality agricultural land (grades 1, 2 and 3a) and would limit uses within the designated Coastal Zones shown on the Local Plan Policies Map to the essential needs of coastal navigation, recreation, tourism and leisure, flood protection, fisheries, nature conservation and / or agriculture. Options 1 therefore represents the current baseline position.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1 is a continuation of current policy, and therefore has a neutral effect when compared to the baseline position.
- Option 2 seeks to remove the protection of the Coastal Zone from the original policy, and would, broadly, result in little change when compared to the baseline position, albeit could reduce some protection of that coastal zone.

  Pending any further comments from Neil Mac.
- Option 3 would have a positive impact on housing in the Borough by potentially allowing additional development within West Lancashire's natural environment, however the negative impacts on the biodiversity of the Borough, climate change and the Borough's land resources would result in this option being less sustainable when compared to the existing baseline.
- Option 4 would restrict development and would require specific mitigation measures to help reduce the impact of a development proposal upon the Borough's landscape history and character. Whilst this would protect the Borough's land resource and biodiversity, it may restrict housing development, or direct it to an area where it is not

needed the most. Therefore, this option is not considered to be particularly sustainable when considered against the existing baseline.

- ***Overall, Option1 is considered the most sustainable.***

EH03 – Flood risk / water resources

Summary of options:

1. Update the existing WLLP policy to reflect advances in national guidance and practice and more recent local evidence on flood risk.

2. Continue with existing Local plan policy GN3- Part 3.

3. A new policy similar to the preferred policy approach but less strict about when a Flood Risk Assessment would be required with planning applications.

Overview of current baseline:

- The current baseline is the NPPF and existing WLLP policy GN3.3. The policy ensures that development does not result in unacceptable flood risk or drainage problems by requiring it to:
  - be located away from Flood Zones 2 and 3 (therefore concentrating on coastal and river sources);
  - where applicable, satisfy the sequential and exception test;
  - be supported by a Flood Risk Assessment (but in fewer circumstances than the preferred approach);
  - show that sustainable drainage systems have been explored; and 5) reduce surface water run-off.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1 would update existing policy to ensure that national guidance and practice is followed, and local evidence on flood risk is considered. Whilst the additional restrictions relating to Flood Risk Assessments and the safe disposal of surface water may have a negative impact on the provision of housing delivery across the borough, the positive impact of this policy approach on flood risk, water quality and land resources results in a sustainable approach to flood risk and water resources.
- Option 2 would seek to continue with the current WLLP policy and therefore would have a neutral effect compared to the existing baseline position.
- Option 3 would result in the relaxation of Flood Risk Assessment requirements for most smaller developments, and therefore whilst this will have a positive impact on housing delivery within the borough, because a greater number of smaller sites could come forward, the negative impact on flood risk and land resources results in a less sustainable option.

- ***Overall, Option 1 is considered the most sustainable.***

EH04 – Contamination and pollution

Summary of options:

1. Continue WLLP approach but strengthen it with regard to health.

2. Have no specific policy on pollution and contamination.

3. Take a more relaxed approach to pollution and contamination in order to prioritise brownfield land development.

Overview of current baseline:

- WLLP Policy GN3.5 requires that proposals for development minimise the risk from all types of pollution and contamination and seek to remediate and restore contaminated land. This represents the current baseline position and aligns closely with Option 1.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1 seeks to continue with the current baseline, whilst also strengthening the approach towards health by presuming against new development that would result in exposure to 'unacceptable' levels of pollution or contamination. This would result in a stronger policy which seeks to direct development to the most sustainable locations and better protects the health and wellbeing of residents of the borough.
- Option 2 would have the most negative effects on the above objectives when compared to the current baseline. It would result in fewer restrictions on development/pollution/contamination which seek to protect the environment and population of West Lancashire and so is considered the least sustainable option.
- Option 3 would result in the relaxation of current policy (the baseline) but it is considered that it would not adequately protect the environment and population of the Borough.

- ***Overall, Option 1 is considered the most sustainable.***

EH05 – Air Quality

Summary of options:

1. General requirement for new development to minimise reductions in air quality and/or improve it where possible, and for sensitive uses to be sited away from sources of air pollution

2. No air quality policy

Overview of current baseline:

- WLLP Policy GN3.5 states proposals for development should 'be designed to minimise any reduction in air quality'. The NPPF states the planning system should actively manage patterns of growth and improve local environmental conditions to, amongst other things, improve air quality and public health. Option 1 aligns most closely with the current baseline position.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1 would deliver some positive improvements to air quality because it would introduce additional requirements for developments to seek opportunities to improve air quality, rather than just minimise any reduction in air quality.
- Option 2 would reduce the effectiveness of the current policy/baseline by removing air quality requirements and placing greater reliance on other policies to reference air quality and (indirectly) affect change.

- ***Overall, Option 1 is considered the most sustainable.***

> **EH06 – Green Infrastructure and Open Space (Approach 1)**

Summary of options:

1. An overarching Green Infrastructure (GI) policy would promote protecting and enhancing the GI network as well as promoting Active Design and the improvement of cycling and walking networks.

2. Update Adopted Local Plan Policy EN3: Provision of Green Infrastructure and Open Recreation Space to include criteria for development of open space to meet national advice.

Overview of current baseline:

- WLLP Policy EN3 is currently split into 2 parts; the first covers Green Infrastructure and the second, Open Space and Recreation Facilities. Option 2 would therefore most closely reflect the current baseline.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1 is considered to be the more sustainable option as it is considered to have a positive effect on a number of the objectives. The potential for a more detailed framework addressing open space and trees will allow for more flexibility in terms of creating sustainable development opportunities.
- Option 2 would update WLLP EN3 to meet national advice and requirements, so would deliver more positive effects when compared to the existing baseline.

- ***Overall, Option 1 Is considered the most sustainable.***

EH06 – Green Infrastructure and Open Space (Approach 2)

Summary of options:

1.   An Open Space, Sport, Leisure and Physical Activity policy.

2.   Update existing Local Plan Policy EN3.

3.   A separate built sports facilities policy.

Overview of current baseline:

- WLLP Policy EN3 is currently split into 2 parts; the first covers Green Infrastructure and the second, Open Space and Recreation Facilities. Option 2 would therefore most closely reflect the current baseline.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1 would cover the loss and provision of open space and built leisure facilities, providing a more detailed policy than the existing baseline, and so creating positive effects on a number of the objectives.
- Option 2 would seek to continue to follow the existing WLLP EN3 approach and therefore does not differ from the existing baseline position. It would therefore be expected to have a neutral effect on the objectives. However, aside other preferred approaches assessed here, it would be expected to result in quite a lengthy policy.
- Option 3 would separate Option 1 into two policies – one dealing with open space and the other with built sports facilities. A more holistic approach, considering both together, may be more sustainable.

- ***Overall, Option1 is considered the most sustainable.***

EH06 – Green Infrastructure and Open Space (Approach 3)

Summary of options:

1.   Open Space and Residential Development. This approach would be a companion to preferred policy approach 2 (above) and would set out details regarding local open space standards for new residential development proposals and the financial costs for provision and maintenance of open space to support requirements for financial contributions.

2. A policy similar to option 1 but also requiring open space to be provided in connection with selected commercial developments.

Overview of current baseline:

- WLLP Policy EN3 is currently split into 2 parts; the first covers Green Infrastructure and the second, Open Space and Recreation Facilities. EN3.2(d) states that, where deficiencies exist, financial contributions towards public open space may be required but does not specify the costs involved, which are currently subject to a separate SPD. However, SPDs are no longer a suitable approach because the Local Plan should set out the costs to ensure that their viability has been appropriately considered as part of plan-making. Both approaches here are therefore a departure from the current position.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1 would seek to secure the provision of open space, or a financial contribution to open space for new residential developments. This is considered a more sustainable policy option than the existing baseline as it will plan positively for open space within the borough, ensuring that open space financial contributions are identified within the Local Plan, rather than a separate SPD.
- Option 2 would do the same as option 1 but would also include these requirements for some commercial developments. This could extend open space provision further than if it were just required for residential developments.

- ***Overall, option 1 and 2 are both considered to be equally sustainable, subject to viability evidence.***

EH06 – Green Infrastructure and Open Space (Approach 4)

Summary of options:

1. A Trees, Woodland, Hedgerows and Landscaping policy.

2. Part 3 of existing Adopted Local Plan Policy EN2: Preserving and Enhancing West Lancashire's Natural Environment.

3, Similar to the preferred approach with the addition of linkages to carbon offset and biodiversity net gain.

Overview of current baseline:

- WLLP Policy EN2 (3) sets out the current policy in respect of trees and landscaping. The NPPF details national policy which applies in the consideration of trees and new developments.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1 would seek to protect and enhance trees, woodlands and hedgerows in the Borough – providing significant benefits to health and wellbeing, addressing climate change, protecting landscape and improving biodiversity and air quality
- Option 2 would seek to continue to follow the existing WLLP approach and therefore would largely have a neutral effect on the existing baseline position.

- Option 3 would follow option 1 but also expressly address the potential for trees to provide carbon offset and enhance biodiversity. This is considered positive when compared to the baseline, but it would result in the doubling up of these requirements as there are other policies which will cover both biodiversity net gain and carbon offsetting.

- ***Overall, Option 1 is considered the most sustainable, although a hybrid with Option 3 may also be appropriate.***

EH07 – Healthy eating and drinking

Summary of options:

1. A healthy eating and drinking policy supported by a healthy eating and drinking Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

2. No specific policy dealing with healthy eating and drinking as it is considered there is no need to address this matter in West Lancashire.

3. No specific policy dealing with healthy eating and drinking but dealing with these issues through [parts of] other policies in the Local Plan.

4. Similar to option 3, having no specific healthy eating and drinking policy, but covering these issues within other Local Plan policies, and, similar to Option 1, preparing a healthy eating and drinking SPD.

Overview of current baseline:
- There is no WLLP policy as such on healthy eating and drinking, nor any current SPD. NPPF Section 8 covers 'Promoting healthy and safe communities' and paragraph 91(c) advises that planning policies and decisions should enable and support healthy lifestyles, for example through access to healthier food.

- In terms of data, the baseline position is that there is a health issue relating to obesity in West Lancashire, although in very general terms, this is no worse than in other areas. There are 'hotspots' of poor health in West Lancashire (including health linked to diet, as well as lifestyle), tying in with general deprivation patterns in the Borough.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1 introduces a new policy on healthy eating and drinking, compared to no current Local Plan or SPD policy; as such it has a positive effect on sustainability in terms of encouraging healthy lifestyles, and possibly also in terms of reducing health inequalities, compared to the baseline. In all other aspects of the sustainability appraisal framework, this preferred policy approach has minimal or no effect.
- Option 2 proposes no policy, so is effectively the same as the baseline. It assumes there is no need to address these issues in West Lancashire; in that sense it is considered the least sustainable option as obesity / health inequalities are an issue in this Borough.

- Options 3 and 4 are very similar to Option 1 in terms of their effect compared to the baseline situation. They seek to address health issues through other Local Plan policies, rather than through a specific policy. Option 3 proposes no SPD to clarify and elaborate on policy and could be argued is marginally less sustainable than Option 4.

- ***As a Local Plan policy has more weight than an SPD policy, overall option 1 is considered the most sustainable, followed by Option 4.***

TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE POLICIES

TI01 – Transport network and access

Summary of options:

1. A policy that sets out specific transport schemes and supports the 20-minute neighbourhood concept.

2. To only list specific schemes that we know will be delivered.

3. To not list any specific schemes.

Overview of current baseline:

- WLLP Policy IF2 sets out a number of transport schemes which the Council would support the delivery of. Aside this, the West Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan (LCC) lists a number of transport projects which are of importance in delivering Local Plan objectives. Option 1 is most closely aligned to the current policy approach (baseline), but with additional support lent to the concept of the 20-minute neighbourhood.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1 would have a positive effect on the majority of the objectives when considered against the baseline. This option would provide a list of desired schemes and would support walking and cycling linkages within the borough.
- Option 2 would result in the omission of some 'ambitious' schemes, such as the Ormskirk bypass and the Skelmersdale rail link, as there is currently no certainty that they will go ahead. Whilst this approach has a positive effect on a number of objectives, this is not the most sustainable of the policy options because of the lack of direction and support this proffers.
- Option 3 would not list any schemes within the policy and so would be unlikely to help positively plan for the growth of the borough. This has a negative effect on a number of the objectives and therefore is the least sustainable of all the above options.

- ***Overall, Option 1 is considered the considered the most sustainable.***

TI02 – Parking standards and Electric vehicle charging points

Summary of options:

1. Continue the current policy approach (Adopted Local Plan Policy IF2 parts 2 and 3).

2. A more restrictive policy to limit car parking spaces in new developments.

3. A policy that does not restrict car parking space i.e. the standards set out in the policy would be a minimum.

4.   Do not require Electric Vehicle Charging Points.

Overview of current baseline:

- The baseline position is represented by the adopted Local Plan and the NPPF. WLLP Policy IF2 (parts 2 and 3) deal with parking standards for residential developments and electric vehicle charging points, respectively, with parking standards for other uses being set out at Appendix F. The NPPF primarily sets out what a local plan should do in relation to setting local parking standards (paragraph 105) and what planning applications should be required to do (paragraph 110). Option 1 therefore represents the baseline position.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1 is the same as the baseline position so would have a neutral effect in terms of sustainability.
- Option 2 could have a negative effect upon the local economy and employment topic but a positive effect upon the land resources topic. It may also have uncertain positive effects upon the transport, climate change, air quality and local services and community infrastructure topics with this uncertainty being a result of more restricted parking discouraging the use of private vehicles.
- Option 3, by not restricting car parking, would have negative effects upon several topics (transport, land resources, climate change, air quality and local services and community infrastructure) whilst only being offset by a positive effect upon the local economy and employment topic.
- Option 4 would have negative effects upon the transport, air quality and climate change topics and is inferior to the current policy represented by option 1. The NPPF does not compensate for the removal of the adopted Local Plan requirement for Electric Vehicle Charging Points as it only indicates that development should be designed to enable charging of plug-in vehicles.

- ***Overall, options 1 or 2 are considered to be the most sustainable.***

TI03 – Digital Connectivity

Summary of options:

1.   A flexible policy that governs communications and digital connectivity. This would support the NPPF, which sets most guidance for communications development.

2.   No policy, and instead rely on national planning policy (NPPF).

3.   A high level of control, for example by requiring new development to go beyond Part R1 of the Building Regulations 2010.

Overview of current baseline:
- The baseline comprises Local Plan Policy IF3: Service Accessibility and Infrastructure for Growth along with section 10 (Supporting high quality communications) of the NPPF and Part R1 of the Building Regulations. Policy IF3 contains limited references to

communications and digital connectivity, comprising a requirement for development to provide essential site communications infrastructure and outlining support for the delivery of broadband and communications technology. NPPF provides greater detail, including in relation to minimising the number of masts and what should not be expected from local authorities in terms of limiting the siting of digital communications. It also details the supporting evidence required for applications. The current baseline position therefore most closely aligns with option 2, supported by some limited Local Plan policy.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1 introduces a new policy on digital connectivity in new developments, compared to minimal current Local Plan policy but with National Planning Policy Framework paragraphs 112-116 and Building Regulations standards on the matter. The positive sentiments of the option 1 result in small positive effects on sustainability in terms of the local economy and employment and local services and community infrastructure topics.
- Option 2 is closest to the baseline position so would have a neutral effect in terms of sustainability, with little or no effect compared to the current baseline situation.
- Option 3 would introduce a high level of control which would have a mixed effect in sustainability terms with a small positive effect upon the cultural landscape and heritage topic but potentially negative effects upon other areas due to its inflexibility and prescriptivism.

- ***Overall, Option 1 would be the most sustainable.***

TI04 – Low carbon and renewable energy

Summary of options:

1. Designate specific areas of opportunity for low carbon and renewable energy ('LCRE').

2. Do not allocate any areas for low carbon and renewable energy to enable a flexible response to schemes.

3. Require all new developments to provide renewable energy – e.g. solar panels on commercial buildings and new dwellings.

Overview of current baseline:

- The baseline position comprises adopted Local Plan Policy EN1: Low Carbon Development and Energy Infrastructure, the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraphs 155 and 158 in particular), National Planning Practice Guidance and Building Regulations Approved Document L (Conservation of Fuel and Power). It should be noted that some measures identified by adopted Local Plan Policy EN1 have ceased nationally, including the Code for Sustainable Homes and 'Allowable Solutions', the latter of which gave developers an economical way of compensating for the CO2 emission reductions that were difficult to achieve through normal design and construction. As such, the baseline position is broadly reflected by option 2.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal

- Option 1 advances the existing baseline position by proactively designating the most appropriate areas of the Borough for wind and solar energy schemes. This would have positive effects in terms of sustainability in relation to the cultural heritage and landscape, climate change / climate emergency, energy and flooding, air quality and local economy and employment topics. In addition, there would be uncertain positive, or negative, effects in relation to land resources.
- Option 2 would have neutral effects in terms of sustainability as it closely resembles the baseline position.
- Option 3 would also have overall positive effects in terms of sustainability; with positive effects relating to the climate change / climate emergency, energy and flooding and air quality topics but would have uncertain negative effects in relation to cultural heritage and landscape.

- ***Overall, option 1 would therefore be the most sustainable; however, option 3 would also have merit compared to the baseline situation****. It should be noted that options 1 and 3 are not mutually exclusive and, if appropriate, it may be possible to combine them into a single future policy.*

TI05 – Energy efficiency in new developments

Summary of options:

1. Require 'major' developments, and encourage other 'minor' developments, to deliver energy efficiency improvements above national standards, considering energy efficiency in scheme design.
   Developers should also be required to monitor energy efficiency improvements in their developments, to evaluate and improve performance to ultimately achieve zero net carbon goals.

2. Require both major and minor residential and commercial developments to demonstrate how they have considered energy efficiency in their design, as a minimum in line with any national standards.

3. Require major, but not minor, developments to demonstrate how they have considered energy efficiency in their design, as a minimum in line with, and / or above, any national standards.

4. Have no requirements for energy efficiency in new buildings and allow developers to provide energy efficiency improvements in accordance with national building regulations only.

5. (Part variation): Do not require developers to monitor and evaluate energy efficiency performance.

Overview of current baseline:

- National policy is set out in the NPPF but does not refer to 'energy efficiency' as such. Other national standards are set out in Part L of Building Regulations (conservation of fuel and power) and through the Future Homes Standard. The current adopted WLLP has a policy (EN1) on low carbon development and energy infrastructure, tying in with Part L of Building Regulations as a minimum, also referring to the Code for Sustainable Homes (now rescinded). Policy EN1 also has a requirement for an Energy Statement setting out how improvements are achieved.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Options 1-3 have few significant differences compared to the baseline, given the baseline policy position set out in the WLLP is similar in requiring meeting Building Regulations as a minimum. The positive effects relative to the baseline (under the topic areas of the climate emergency and air quality) are the most marked for Option 1 as this requires energy efficiency improvements <u>above</u> national standards for major development and encourages them for minor development.
- For Options 2 and 3, the positive effects compared to the baseline are less marked as Option 2 only requires energy efficiency <u>in line</u> with national standards, and Option 3 only applies to major developments, and could be either in line with, or above, national standards.
- Option 4 has negative effects compared to the baseline for the topic areas of the climate emergency, and air quality, given its lack of local plan requirements to exceed national standards. (The baseline encourages going above national standards, or at least anticipates national standards increasing over time.)
- Option 5 is considered only to have minor effects compared to the baseline for the above two topic areas, as it is not guaranteed that a lack of monitoring and evaluation would actually result in lower energy efficiency standards, or if it did, these would not be expected to be significant.

- ***Overall, Option 1 is considered to be the most sustainable, followed by Option 3.***

TI06 – Water efficiency in new residential developments

Summary of options:

1. To introduce tighter, local restrictions, above that of the minimum optional Building Regulation standards, to improve water efficiency in new residential developments.

2. Do not have a policy; rely instead on Building Regulations to deliver water efficiency.

Overview of current baseline:

- There is no WLLP policy dealing with water efficiency in new developments, nor any current SPD. There are no explicit references to water efficiency in the NPPF but there are more general references to water management and that local plan policies should

support measures to ensure the future resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts. NPPG (Housing: optional technical standards) indicates how a tighter water efficiency standard may be required in new dwellings. Building Regulations Approved Document G provides guidance on the supply of water to a property, including water efficiency i.e. an easily accessible water supply that doesn't incur wastage. This relates to the use of fittings in relation to water consumption, e.g. for a toilet, and is optional. However, there is an overall mandatory national requirement for all new homes to meet the usage standard set out in Building Regulations of 125 litres/person/day. Option 2 therefore represents the baseline position.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1 introduces a new policy on water efficiency in new developments, compared to no current Local Plan policy and optional Building Regulations standards on the matter. As such it has a positive effect on sustainability in terms of helping to improve resilience to the likely effects of climate change by improving water efficiencies and so reducing demand on the water supply and, to some extent, reducing the amount of wastewater generated by development. In all other aspects of the sustainability appraisal framework, this preferred option has little or no effect compared to the baseline situation.
- Option 2 proposes no policy, so is the same as the baseline. It assumes there is no need to expressly address the issue in West Lancashire; in that sense it is considered less sustainable than option 1.

- ***Overall, Option 1 is the most sustainable.*** *Using water resources more efficiently is a global issue that policy at the local level can contribute towards.*

OTHER POLICIES

OT01 – Sequential tests

Summary of options:

1. A Sequential Test Policy comprising retail and other town centre uses on sites outside centres and proposals at risk from flooding. This is about guiding new town centre uses to town centres as a first priority, then edge of town centre sites and finally out of centre locations that are accessible. In relation to flood risk, it entails guiding new development towards sites at less risk of flooding from all sources

2. To not have a Local Plan sequential test policy and rely on national planning advice instead

3. Setting out the approach to undertaking a sequential test, as outlined by option 1, in separate town centre and flood risk policies

4. Existing Local Plan Policy GN5: Sequential Tests. This relates to retail and other town centre uses on sites outside centres; proposals at risk from flooding; affordable housing, employment uses and community facilities on Protected Land; affordable Housing or Gypsy and Traveller sites in the Green Belt; and accommodation for temporary agricultural / horticultural workers

Overview of current baseline:

*   There is an existing WLLP policy on sequential tests (Policy GN5) as well as the matter being covered by the National Planning Policy Framework sections 7 (Ensuring the vitality of town centres) and 14 (Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change) and supported by National Planning Practice Guidance. This is the baseline situation and represents option 4.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal

*   Options 1, 2 and 3 differ in composition compared to the baseline, but all would be equally sustainable as the baseline position because all also have neutral effects in terms of sustainability. This is because the policy approach simply gives clarity relating to technical matters of how to undertake a satisfactory sequential test. Therefore, this deals with the quality of the test i.e. how to do it. Other local plan policies detail additional uses of relevance and circumstances (other than town centre uses and flood risk which are covered by national advice) and the sequence to be followed in establishing site / a proposal's suitability for those uses. What other uses that are listed in the sequential test as alternative policy approaches is therefore irrelevant in varying the assessment of them in terms of sustainability.
*   Option 4 follows the current local plan policy approach in West Lancashire and, along with national planning advice, this represents the baseline; as such it has a neutral effect in terms of sustainability.
*   ***As such, all options 1-4 are equally sustainable and the choice of option would be determined by other matters e.g. option 3 unduly repeats policy.***

OT02 – Viability

Summary of options:

1. A general 'hierarchy of viability', reflecting the priorities of the Local Plan, and 'ranking' the desirable outcomes that should be achieved (e.g. Affordable housing, biodiversity net gain, infrastructure). The policy would also include criteria for demonstrating viability (e.g. marketing)

2. Have a very rigid policy that only allows the set 'hierarchy' to be followed with no variation from it. The approach for demonstrating viability (e.g. marketing) would also be stricter than under current policy GN4.

3. Have a more relaxed policy that essentially allows applicants to choose the desirable outcomes they want with very few or even no criteria to be satisfied. The approach for demonstrating viability (e.g. marketing) would be less strict than under current policy GN4.

Overview of current baseline:

- WLLP Policy GN4 takes a flexible approach, to allow some deviation from policy where it can be demonstrated that a use is no longer viable and marketing evidence shows there is no demand for that use. The importance of viability repeats itself through the NPPF, and further guidance can be found in the MHCLG Guidance Note on Viability. Option 1 is most closely aligned to the existing baseline, but includes additional requirements relating to a viability hierarchy.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1 is considered the most sustainable option, maintaining the current policy GN4, but with an added approach to 'rank' the desirable outcomes that should be achieved through new development, based on viability evidence. Option 1 promotes the greatest flexibility in approach, balancing viability considerations with achieving the greatest 'knock-on' benefits possible, via a hierarchy, informed by evidence.
- Option 2 would introduce a stricter policy than the current baseline position. At this stage, without the viability evidence, the level of impact on sustainability cannot truly be known – in theory it could help greater support delivery of benefits, but a higher number of requirements could also mean developments / benefits may ultimately not be delivered as they could be rendered unviable.
- Option 3 would introduce a weaker policy than the current baseline position. It would be expected that applicants would choose to deliver very few, or no, requirements meaning that few benefits would be delivered, and/or there would be less control in ensuring that the 'higher priority' items are delivered.

- ***Overall, Option 1 is considered the most sustainable.***

OT03 – Developer Contributions

Summary of options:

1. To follow the current local plan policy approach of requiring certain developments to provide a development contribution towards funding or delivering new infrastructure requirements.

2. To not have a policy requiring developer contributions.

Overview of current baseline:

- There is an existing WLLP policy on developer contributions (Policy IF4) and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is operative in West Lancashire. There is also an SPD (Provision of Public Open Space in New Residential Developments) dealing with planning obligations (Section 106 legal agreements) and NPPF Section 4 covers 'Planning conditions and obligations' including setting out the 3 tests for when obligations may be sought. This is the baseline situation and represents option 1.

- The baseline position allows the local authority to raise CIL funds from developers who are undertaking new building projects in the area and the money can be used to pay for a wide range of infrastructure that is needed to support new development. Planning obligations can be used where they are necessary to make a proposed development acceptable.

Summary of Sustainability Appraisal:

- Option 1 follows the current local plan policy approach in West Lancashire of requiring certain developments to provide a development contribution towards funding or delivering new infrastructure requirements. As this represents the baseline, it has a neutral effect in terms of sustainability.
- Option 2 (to not have a policy requiring developer contributions) would still enable both the Community Infrastructure Levy and planning obligations to be used to deliver infrastructure and affordable housing, but it is slightly less sustainable in relation to the population, health and social inclusion and the local services and community infrastructure topics.

- ***Therefore Option 1, whilst neutral, is the more sustainable of the two.***

4.   What Happens Next?

4.1.1   Having read this SA report, the Council is inviting you to comment on its content (and also the content of the Appendices, if necessary). The easiest way to do this is online at www.westlancs.gov.uk/lp2040, where you will find instructions on how to comment.

4.1.2   All the Issues & Options consultation papers (including this SA report), as well as further details of how to engage with the consultation, are also available at all libraries in West Lancashire, at the Council Offices, 52 Derby Street, Ormskirk, L39 2DF and at the Customer Service Point, Unit 142, first floor of The Concourse, Skelmersdale, WN8 6LN.

4.1.3   You can also phone the Council if you have any queries about the Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation to speak to a Council Officer on 01695 585194.

Next Steps

4.1.4   With regard to the wider process for preparing the Local Plan, the Council will consider the feedback received from this 'Regulation 18, Issues and Options' consultation and use it in preparing the next stages of the Local Plan. Further SAs will be undertaken at each stage of the Local Plan.