

WEST LANCASHIRE LOCAL PLAN REVIEW

Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report for
Issues and Options

FEBRUARY 2017

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Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report for Issues and Options

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background and Purpose of this Report

Local Plan Review

- 1.1.1 The current West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027, hereafter referred to as ‘the West Lancashire Local Plan’ or ‘the Plan’, was adopted in October 2013. West Lancashire Borough Council (WLBC) has undertaken a review of the Plan to ensure it remains up to date in light of the constantly changing context surrounding planning and development, and the evolution of National Planning Policy (NPP).
- 1.1.2 A Strategic Development Options Paper and supporting Topic Papers covering environment, economic and social policy as well as a spatial portrait, has been produced for consultation. These documents set out the key planning-related issues facing West Lancashire and consider options for how new local planning policy might be able to address those issues.

Purpose of this Report

- 1.1.3 Arcadis Consulting (UK) Ltd has been commissioned to undertake the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of the Local Plan Review. HRA is a legal requirement and concerns the assessment of the plan’s effects on designated sites of European Nature Conservation Importance, including Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA). It also considers effects on Ramsar sites, potential SPAs and candidate SACs (hereafter collectively referred to as ‘European sites’).
- 1.1.4 A HRA Screening Report was prepared for the current Local Plan. This will need to be revised and updated to consider the issues and options arising from the Local Plan Review. This report considers high level potential risks associated with the strategic development options and the associated economic, environmental and social policies identified within the West Lancashire Local Plan Review Issues and Options Consultation papers with regard to European Sites. It forms an important first step in the development of the HRA process which will seek to consider the Local Plan preferred options in more detail later in the year. This process will be undertaken in consultation with Natural England (NE).

1.2 Background to Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 1.2.1 Under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, an assessment is required where a plan or project may give rise to significant effects upon any Natura 2000 sites (also known as ‘European sites’). Within West Lancashire there are two European sites ; however, within a 20km radius of the borough boundary there are a further six sites which form part of the Natura 2000 network that could potentially be affected by the Local Plan.
- 1.2.2 Natura 2000 is a network of areas designated to conserve natural habitats and species that are rare, endangered, vulnerable or endemic within the European Community. This includes Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), designated under the Habitats Directive for their habitats and/or species of European importance, and Special Protection Areas (SPAs), classified under Directive 2009/147/EC on the Conservation of Wild Birds (the codified version of Directive 79/409/EEC as amended) for rare, vulnerable and regularly occurring migratory bird species and internationally important wetlands.
- 1.2.3 In addition, it is a matter of law that candidate SACs (cSACs) and Sites of Community Importance (SCI) are considered in this process; furthermore, it is Government Policy that sites designated under the 1971 Ramsar Convention for their internationally important wetlands (Ramsar sites) and potential SPAs (pSPAs) are also considered.
- 1.2.4 The requirements of the Habitats Directive are transposed into English and Welsh law by means of the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) Regulations 2010¹, as amended.

Paragraph 3, Article 6 of the Habitats Directive states that:

¹ SI 2010/490: Explanatory memorandum to the conservation of habitats and species regulations 2010.

'Any plan or project not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site but likely to have a significant effect thereon, either individually or in combination with other plans or projects, shall be subject to appropriate assessment of its implications for the site in view of the site's conservation objectives. In the light of the conclusions of the assessment of the implications for the site and subject to paragraph 4 (see below), the competent national authority shall agree to the plan or project only having ascertained that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site concerned and, if appropriate, after having obtained the opinion of the general public.'

Paragraph 4, Article 6 of the Habitats Directive states that:

'If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of social or economic nature, the Member State shall take all compensatory measures to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected. It shall inform the Commission of the compensatory measures adopted.'

1.2.5 The overarching aim of HRA is to determine, in view of a site's conservation objectives and qualifying interests, whether a plan, either in isolation and/or in combination with other plans, would have a significant adverse effect on the European site. If the Screening (the first stage of the process, see Section 3 for details) concludes that significant effects are likely, then Appropriate Assessment must be undertaken to determine whether there will be adverse effects on a site's integrity.

1.3 Legislation and Guidance

1.3.1 The HRA is being made in accordance with the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, as amended. In doing so, this screening report has drawn upon the following guidance:

- European Commission, Managing Natura 2000 sites: The provisions of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.
- European Commission, Guidance document on Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC.
- Department for Communities and Local Government (2006) Planning for the Protection of European Sites: Appropriate Assessment. Guidance for Regional Spatial Strategies and Local Development Documents.
- DTA Publications Limited, The Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook.

2 Introduction to the Local Plan Review Issues and Options

2.1 Draft Vision

- 2.1.1 The Local Plan Vision is a statement of how West Lancashire intends to be at the end of the Local Plan Period. A draft vision has been developed as part of the Strategic Development Options Paper to be put forward for public consultation (see Box 1). The final Vision will be dependent upon which of the strategic options is ultimately selected and therefore the current vision represents what the council would like to achieve based on the evidence currently available.

Box 1: Draft Vision for West Lancashire

West Lancashire will be an attractive place where people want to live, work and visit. The Borough will retain its local character and will also make the most of its highly accessible location within the North West and its links with the three City Regions of Liverpool, Greater Manchester and Central Lancashire and to this end will be an outward looking proactive partner within this setting.

West Lancashire will grow economically; creating jobs, attracting new businesses and making sure that existing employers have every opportunity to expand and succeed in the Borough, set within the three City Regions context.

West Lancashire will play its part in providing a fantastic range of housing, at the right quality, as a fundamental factor in delivering economic growth and leaving a lasting, vital legacy for the next generations. This will include provision of affordable housing to ensure positive impacts on the health, wellbeing, social mobility and general quality of life for West Lancashire residents.

The Borough's three main settlements of Skelmersdale with Up Holland, Ormskirk with Aughton and Burscough will be the focus for new development, with each town building on its individual strengths but all three working together to reduce inequality across the Borough by providing a well-rounded employment base, opportunities for business and the right residential mix. The regeneration of Skelmersdale in particular will be vital to this and all three town centres will be more robust and vibrant, offering what people need in a 21st Century town centre.

West Lancashire's fantastic potential will have been developed through investment in young people through education and training and in particular working with Edge Hill University and West Lancashire College to ensure that a greater number of post graduate jobs are created in order to retain skills and talents within the Borough.

In rural areas, Village and Hamlet settlements will retain their rural character whilst seeking to provide local focal points for services and employment, where appropriate, and the provision of good quality affordable homes. The agricultural and horticultural industry will continue to be a focus in rural areas.

The identity and unique landscape of West Lancashire will be valued, enhanced and sustained in accordance with best practice, enabling people to access and enjoy all that it offers. This will incorporate the Borough's historic buildings and character, its valuable and important wildlife, habitats and biodiversity, its vital agricultural role and its network of green spaces and waterways.

Infrastructure in West Lancashire will be improved and focused on the places that need it, be that improved sustainable transport options within and between the larger settlements and to key locations outside of the Borough (such as the proposed Skelmersdale Rail Link), improved utilities and communications, improved education offer or improved health, community and leisure infrastructure – all of which will provide a better, and healthier, quality of life for those who live, work and visit in West Lancashire.

2.2 Objectives

2.2.1 Ten draft objectives have also been developed and set out how the Vision will be delivered, these are outlined in Box 2 (below).

Box 2: Draft Objectives

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 imperatives of climate change, 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 the targets as agreed at the COP 21 Climate Change Summit 2015 by prioritizing Renewable Energy and low carbon development through greater emphasis on Solar, Onshore and Offshore Wind, Ground and Air source heat technologies, localised district energy schemes and all renewable technologies identified through Research and Development as progressive alternatives to all fossil fuel based sources with air quality as a priority.

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 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.

2.3 Strategic Development Options

2.3.1 The Strategic Development Options outline the potential options for delivering new housing and employment land within the Borough. They cover the following three variables:

- The amount of development land required for housing and employment uses per year;
- How far into the future the Local Plan is to look (the Plan Period); and
- The way the total amount of development land required throughout the Local Plan Period is spread across the Borough.

2.3.2 This Report will assess the risks associated with the strategic development options and the associated topic policies with regard to European Sites.

3 The Habitat Regulations Assessment Process

3.1 Stages in HRA

3.1.1 This section provides an outline of the stages involved in HRA and the specific methods that have been used in preparing this report.

3.1.2 The requirements of the Habitats Directive comprise four distinct stages:

1. **Screening** is the process which initially identifies whether there are likely significant effects upon a European site arising from a project or plan, either alone or in-combination with other projects or plans, and considers whether these impacts may have a significant effect on the site's qualifying habitats and/or species. It is important to note that the burden of evidence is to show, on the basis of objective information, that there will be no likely significant effect; if the effect is likely to be significant, or if there is uncertainty, that would trigger the need for an Appropriate Assessment. There is European Court of Justice case law to the effect that unless the likelihood of a significant effect can be ruled out on the basis of objective information, and adopting the precautionary principle, then an Appropriate Assessment must be made.
2. **Appropriate Assessment** is the detailed consideration of the impact on the integrity of the European site of the project or plan, either alone or in combination with other projects or plans, with respect to the site's conservation objectives and its structure and function. This is to determine whether or not there will be adverse effects on the integrity of the site. This stage also includes the development of mitigation measures to avoid or reduce any possible impacts.
3. **Assessment of alternative solutions** is the process which examines alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the project or plan that would avoid any adverse impacts on the integrity of the European site, should avoidance or mitigation measures be unable to cancel out such adverse effects.
4. **Assessment where no alternative solutions exist and where adverse impacts remain.** At Stage 4, an assessment is made with regard to whether or not the development is necessary for imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI). If this is demonstrated to be the case, consent for the plan or project can be given, but only the necessary compensatory measures needed to protect and maintain the overall coherence of the Natura 2000 network have been secured.

3.2 Approach to Screening

3.2.1 This Screening Report takes into account the requirements of the Habitats Directive and relevant guidance produced by David Tyldesley Associates².

3.2.2 The following stages have been completed:

- Identification of all European sites that could potentially be affected (including those outside of the West Lancashire Local Plan area);
- A review of each European site, including the features for which the site is designated, the Conservation Objectives, and an understanding of the current conservation status and the vulnerability of the individual features to threats; and
- A high-level review of the Local Plan Review issues and options to identify which options have the potential to affect the European sites in order to inform the formulation of the preferred options with the aim of minimising the potential for affecting European sites.

3.3 Consultation

3.3.1 NE will be consulted on the findings of the Screening Report at the 'preferred options' stage. Responses from NE will be fed into any further iterations of the HRA Report and Appropriate Assessment (if required) for the Local Plan.

² DTA Publications Limited. The Habitats Regulations Assessment Handbook, accessed online July 2016.

4 Initial Screening of European Sites

4.1 Approach to Identifying Sites

- 4.1.1 There are European sites located within, and on, the Borough boundary which need to be taken into consideration in this assessment. In addition, European sites outside of the Borough may be affected by activities undertaken in West Lancashire if they are connected through an impact pathway, for example, hydrological links, or, if mobile species (i.e. birds) use land which is functionally linked to a European site, for example for foraging.
- 4.1.2 Therefore, in addition to all sites within the Borough, European sites which may be affected by the Local Plan activities through an identifiable impact pathway have been considered, within a 20km distance from the Borough.

4.2 European Sites

4.2.1 Two European sites have been identified within the Borough boundary. A further six sites are located within 20km of the Borough. Only those sites within 20km which have identifiable impact pathways have been included in the list i.e. although Manchester Moss SAC lies within 20km, this site has not been included as there are no identifiable impact pathways between the site and the Local Plan policies.

4.2.2 The sites are detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1: European sites within 20km

European site	Reason for inclusion
<p>Martin Mere SPA and Ramsar site</p> <p>Designated for supporting Internationally important numbers of wintering, passage and breeding birds.</p>	<p>Located within the West Lancashire Borough Local Plan Area.</p>
<p>Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/ Ramsar site</p> <p>Designated for supporting Internationally important numbers of wintering, passage and breeding birds.</p>	<p>Located partly within the West Lancashire Borough Local Plan Area.</p>
<p>Sefton Coast SAC</p> <p>Designated for supporting important coastal habitats, petalwort (<i>Petalophyllum ralfsii</i>) and great crested newts (<i>Triturus cristatus</i>).</p>	<p>Located within 50m of the Borough Local Plan Area, occupying the same geographical area as parts of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar.</p>
<p>Mersey Narrows & North Wirral Foreshore SPA and Ramsar site</p> <p>Designated for supporting Internationally important numbers of wintering birds.</p>	<p>Located within Merseyside, with closest point approximately 9km from West Lancashire Borough Local Plan Area, with hydraulic connections to the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar (within West Lancashire Borough Local Plan Area) and currently subject to recreational pressures.</p>
<p>Liverpool Bay SPA</p> <p>Designated for supporting Internationally important numbers of wintering and breeding birds. There is currently ongoing consultation in relation to the extension of the SPA.</p>	<p>Located immediately adjacent to Mersey Estuary with hydraulic connections to Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar (within West Lancashire Borough Local Plan Area).</p>
<p>Dee Estuary SAC, SPA & Ramsar site</p> <p>Designated for supporting Internationally important numbers of wintering, passage and breeding birds.</p>	<p>The SAC is located 9km south of West Lancashire Borough Local Plan Area; the SPA/Ramsar is located 20km south of West Lancashire Borough Local Plan Area. There are hydraulic connections to the Ribble and Alt Estuaries SPA/Ramsar (within West Lancashire Borough Local Plan Area).</p>

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European site	Reason for inclusion
<p>Mersey Estuary SPA/Ramsar site</p> <p>Designated for supporting Internationally important numbers of wintering and passage birds.</p>	<p>Located approximately 15km south of West Lancashire Borough Local Plan Area.</p>
<p>Morecambe Bay SPA and Ramsar site</p> <p>Designated for supporting Internationally important numbers of wintering, passage and breeding birds.</p>	<p>Located approximately 13km north of the West Lancashire Borough Local Plan Area (Morecambe Bay SAC is located approximately 22km north of the Local Plan Area, so is not included).</p>

5 Initial Screening Of The West Lancashire Local Plan Review Issues and Options

5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 The initial screening of the West Lancashire Local Plan Issues and Options in relation to the European Sites is presented below. At this early stage of the plan, the spatial options are insufficiently developed to accurately predict whether they are likely to have effects upon European sites or otherwise. A precautionary high-level approach has therefore been adopted which identifies possible impact pathways and promotes a more detailed consideration of the potential Likely Significant Effects (LSE) upon European sites as the options develop.
- 5.1.2 The assessment of the Strategic Development Options is detailed in Section 5.3, Table 2 and is designed to help steer the further development of the choice of options. In addition to the Strategic Development Options, the policies and options identified in the supporting topic papers for the economy, environment and social aspects have also been assessed for the potential to effect European sites. Further details are provided in Section 5.4 to 5.6 and Tables 3 to 5 (below).
- 5.1.3 Once the Plan Review has developed beyond the Issues and Options stage, and draft land allocation options have been identified (i.e. the preferred options stage and beyond), a further HRA Screening exercise will be undertaken and consulted upon with NE.

5.2 Potential Impacts

5.2.1 There are a number of ways in which development can have an effect upon a European site. At this stage of the Local Plan, it is not possible to determine precisely whether effects are likely; however, as a minimum, the following potential impacts will be considered throughout the review process:

- Direct habitat and species loss associated with European sites
- Habitat degradation as a result of increased air pollution
- Loss of habitat functionally linked to a European site (i.e. used by overwintering birds for foraging)
- Disturbance to habitats and species through increased recreational activity, during operational stage
- Changes in water quality where sites are hydrologically linked to European sites
- Disturbance to species as a result of construction activities/operational stage

5.3 Assessment of Strategic Development Options

- 5.3.1 As described in Section 2.3, the Strategic Development Options Paper includes the provision of five options for the amount of development that would be required for housing and employment per year. The options range from 8 ha (200 dwellings) for housing and 2 ha of employment land per year to 24 ha (600 dwellings) and 6 ha of employment land per year. All development has the potential to impact upon European sites depending upon a number of factors. Without greater detail on the scale and location of individual development proposals it is not possible to determine specific impacts although the greater the amount of land earmarked for development, the greater the potential for impacts upon European sites is likely to be. That said, a smaller amount of development sited poorly could have greater impacts than larger amounts of development sited away from sensitive areas.
- 5.3.2 The second variable identified in the options paper is the length of the Plan Period. The length of the Plan Period would not be expected to result in significantly different amounts of development occurring over the same timeframe and therefore potential effects upon European sites are likely to be similar in terms of the effects of land take and recreational pressures. However, a shorter Plan period would necessitate more frequent review of the HRA and therefore safeguard against unforeseen changes giving rise to new likely significant effects. For example: if the population of pink-footed geese showed a significant decline for some reason, then sites supporting numbers that are not currently significant may become relatively more important. If the Plan was only reviewed every 38-40 years, this would, in

theory not affect whether those areas were allocated for development; whereas if it happened every 20 - 25, then a new HRA might influence the next plan.

- 5.3.3 The final variable outlined in the Strategic Development Options Paper relates to the spatial distribution of the proposed development land across the Borough. These options could lead to differences in potential effects upon European sites given that the proximity to European sites or land considered to be functionally linked to European sites will be a major factor in determining the extent of potential effects. The four spatial options identified are outlined in Table 2 (below) with an assessment as to their potential implications for the European sites in and adjacent to the Borough.

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Table 2: Strategic Development Options Screening

Issue/Option	Additional Issues	Potential for Effect upon European Sites
<p>Scenario 1: New development spread around West Lancashire according to the current distribution of existing households and employment land</p>	<p>Requirements for improvement to waste water treatment and consideration of highways impacts of new development, particularly for Ormskirk with Aughton and Burscough.</p>	<p>This scenario would see the bulk of new development focussed in and around Skelmersdale, with Ormskirk with Aughton and Burscough the next largest settlements. Employment is heavily skewed towards Skelmersdale and the South-Eastern Parishes, therefore new employment land would be largely focused in this area.</p> <p>Whilst new development has the potential to impact upon the European sites identified in Table 1, focussing development in and around the existing heavily developed areas is likely to represent a lower risk in terms of the potential for significant effects compared to development in more rural areas.</p> <p>Skelmersdale lies further from the European sites than both Ormskirk with Aughton and Burscough and is also much closer to the M58 corridor, and other large towns along the M6 corridor. As such, focussing development in this area is likely to minimise the potential for impacts upon European sites.</p> <p>It is considered unlikely that there would be any land-take within a European site as a result of this option.</p>
<p>Scenario 2: Focuses new development in and around the Key Service Centres of Skelmersdale, Ormskirk with Aughton and Burscough, with these towns taking a larger proportion of the housing development while rural areas take less. A larger share of employment land would be in Ormskirk with Aughton compared to Scenario 1 and a lower share in rural areas.</p>	<p>Requirements for improvement to waste water treatment and consideration of highways impacts of new development, particularly for Ormskirk with Aughton and Burscough.</p>	<p>This scenario would see the bulk of new development focussed in and around Skelmersdale, with Ormskirk with Aughton and Burscough the next largest settlements. Under this scenario, new employment land would be more evenly split between Skelmersdale and Ormskirk with Aughton.</p> <p>Whilst new development has the potential to impact upon the European sites identified in Table 1, focussing development in and around the existing heavily developed areas is likely to represent a lower risk in terms of the potential for likely significant effects compared to development in more rural areas.</p> <p>Of the three Key Service Centres, Burscough is located closest to Martin Mere SPA/Ramsar site and, therefore, increasing the amount of housing development in and around this town compared with Scenario 1 could increase the potential for impacts upon this site and the land that is functionally linked to it.</p> <p>It is considered unlikely that any land-take within a European site would occur as a result of this option.</p>

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Issue/Option	Additional Issues	Potential for Effect upon European Sites
<p>Scenario 3: Allocates more new development to rural areas and less to the Key Service Centres. Greater levels of development would therefore be seen in the Northern, Eastern and Western parishes.</p>	<p>Potential for greater extent of new infrastructure in rural areas to facilitate expansion or creation of rural settlements.</p>	<p>This scenario sees a higher proportion of development within rural areas compared to the other three scenarios proposed. It is considered likely that this scenario would require the development of a greater degree of 'greenfield' sites which could represent land that is functionally linked to the Ribble and Alt SPA/Ramsar site (or other European sites designated for bird interest features). Development in the Northern and Western Parishes would be in closer proximity to the European sites and therefore the risk of indirect effects would be greater than for the other scenarios.</p> <p>It is considered unlikely that any land-take within a European site would occur as a result of this option.</p>
<p>Scenario 4: A variation on Scenario 2 but with an increased focus on Skelmersdale over the other two Key Service Centres (although employment land under this Scenario remains below that which would occur through Scenario 1).</p>	<p>Would support the need for a proposed Skelmersdale Rail Link and new railway station.</p>	<p>This scenario would see the bulk of new development focussed in and around Skelmersdale. New employment land would be largely focused at Skelmersdale.</p> <p>Whilst new development has the potential to impact upon the European sites identified in Table 1, focussing development in and around the existing developed areas is likely to represent a lower risk in terms of the potential for significant effects compared to development in more rural areas.</p> <p>It is considered unlikely that any land-take within a European site would occur as a result of this option.</p>

5.4 Assessment of Economic Policy Options

5.4.1 The Local Plan Review includes a topic paper covering a range of options for economic policies to be addressed. Table 3 provides details of the proposed economic policies with the associated options and identifies whether the policy as a whole or individual options within a policy have the potential for effects upon European sites to occur.

Table 3: Economic Policy Options Screening

Policy	Policy Options	Potential for Effect upon European Sites
<p>Policy 1: Providing the right scale, mix and distribution of employment land</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Allocate sites specifically for strategic distribution and warehousing needs. 2) Allocate new sites to encourage geographical clusters of specialist employment uses. 3) Allocate all new sites for the range of B classes uses (business, general industry and warehousing). 4) Increase town centre office sites. 	<p>Of the four proposed options related to this policy, option 2 has the highest potential for effects upon European sites as a result of the potential for a storage, processing and distribution site within a rural location. Further information on the proposed location of such a site would be required before the LSE could be assessed.</p> <p>Options 1 and 4 focus the provision of employment land on existing sites or within / on the edge of existing developed areas so the potential for affecting European sites is considered to be minimal.</p> <p>Option 3 relates to increasing the flexibility of the type of use rather than directing the location of development, therefore effects upon European sites are unlikely.</p> <p>Additional information would be required in relation to all of the proposed options in order to assess the significance of potential effects on the European sites. This would be considered further at the preferred options stage.</p>
<p>Policy 2: Existing employment areas</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Continue with the existing Local Plan policy approach. 2) Protect all existing employment areas for business class employment uses. 3) Designate selected employment areas either wholly or in part for non-business class uses. 4) Do not protect employment areas for B1, B2 and B8 uses. 	<p>This policy and options relate to the type of use within existing employment areas. For Options 1 to 3 there are unlikely to be any impact pathways from the implementation of this policy to the European sites which will be considered in the screening assessment.</p> <p>Options 1 to 3 (if taken forward) associated with this Policy would not lead to effects upon European sites, and therefore if this option is taken forward, it is likely to be Screened Out of the assessment at the preferred options stage.</p> <p>Option 4 would allow for some employment sites to be given over to more profitable housing development. There is the possibility that should such sites be located close to Martin Mere or the Ribble and Alt SPA / Ramsar sites an increase in recreational pressure upon the site could occur.</p> <p>Further information would be required in relation to Option 4 (if it was taken forward) in order to assess the significance of</p>

Policy	Policy Options	Potential for Effect upon European Sites
		<p>potential effects on the European sites. This would be considered further at the preferred options stage.</p>
<p>Policy 3: Spreading economic opportunities by supporting the rural economy</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Continue with existing Local Plan policy. 2) Increased development in rural areas. 3) A tourism and visitor economy policy. 	<p>Options 1 to 3 of this policy all have the potential for LSE on the European sites which will be considered in the screening assessment, as a result of providing for development within rural areas.</p> <p>Further information would be required in relation to Options 1, 2 and 3 (if any of these options are taken forward) in order to assess the significance of potential effects on the European sites. This would be considered further at the preferred options stage.</p>
<p>Policy 4: Network and Hierarchy of Centres</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Review the Local Plan centre hierarchy. 	<p>This Policy provides details on the centre hierarchy and provides for a review of the hierarchy to consider whether any centres should be moved, deleted or added to the hierarchy. The policy itself does not provide for change and would not lead directly to any impacts on European sites.</p> <p>The option associated with this Policy would not lead to effects upon European sites, and therefore it is likely to be Screened Out of the assessment at the preferred options stage.</p>
<p>Policy 5: Ensuring Healthy Town, Village and Local Centres – Appropriate Uses</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Review town centre, village and local centre boundaries in the Adopted Local Plan. 2) Review primary shopping area boundaries in the Adopted Local Plan. 3) Review policy approach to determining appropriate uses in town centres. 	<p>This policy and options relate to aspirations for community planning of existing town and village centres. The implementation of these policies is not expected to have any implications for European sites.</p> <p>The options associated with this Policy would not lead to effects upon European sites, and therefore whichever options are taken forward, they are likely to be Screened Out of the assessment at the preferred options stage.</p>
<p>Policy 6: Sites for Town Centres Uses</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Adopted Local Plan Approach – Skelmersdale concentration. 2) Allocate site(s) for town centre uses at Ormskirk. 3) Allocate a non-town centre site for a retail warehouse park. 4) Allocate a site to meet retail needs in the north of the Borough. 	<p>Options 1 and 2 relate to site allocations for development for existing town centres. Given that these options focus allocation sites within town centres, no LSE upon the European sites are anticipated as a result of the implementation of either of these options.</p> <p>Options 1 and 2 associated with this Policy would not lead to effects upon European sites and therefore if either of these options are taken forward, they are likely to be Screened Out of the assessment at the preferred options stage.</p> <p>Options 3 and 4 allow for the potential</p>

Policy	Policy Options	Potential for Effect upon European Sites
		<p>allocation of a site outside of the existing town/village centres and therefore in a more rural location. It is not clear whether such a site would be converting existing development or would be new development, therefore potential effects upon European sites cannot be ruled out and further information on scale and location of such developments would be required.</p> <p>Further information would be required in relation to Options 3 and 4 (if they are taken forward) in order to assess the significance of potential effects on the European sites. This would be considered further at the preferred options stage.</p>

5.5 Assessment of Environmental Policy Options

5.5.1 The Local Plan Review includes a topic paper covering a range of options for environmental policies to be addressed. Table 4 provides details of the proposed environmental policies with the associated options and identifies whether each policy as a whole or individual options within a policy have the potential for effects upon European sites to occur.

Table 4: Environmental Policy Options Screening

Policy	Policy Options	Potential for Effect upon European Sites
Policy 1: Local Nature Conservation Sites	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Continue with the Local Nature Conservation Sites designation in the next Local Plan. 2) Remove the Local Nature Conservation Sites designation from the Local Plan. 	<p>This policy is designed to account for changes to the procedure for designating local sites of Nature Conservation Importance. There is a move towards designating Ecological Networks to further protect, and enhance (where possible) the natural environment.</p> <p>The implementation of either option associated with this policy is considered to have no adverse impacts. Potentially some beneficial effects on the European sites could occur, through ensuring a coherent network of ecological sites across the borough which would provide a resource for birds associated with SPA and Ramsar sites.</p> <p>The options associated with this Policy would not lead to negative effects upon European sites, and there is potential for beneficial effects to occur. Therefore, whichever option is taken forward it is likely to be Screened Out at the preferred options stage.</p>
Policy 2: Renewable Energy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Designate specific areas where the generation of wind energy, solar farms and any other renewable energy 	<p>Either option associated with this policy could lead to the development of renewable energy schemes.</p>

Policy	Policy Options	Potential for Effect upon European Sites
	<p>technology may be appropriate.</p> <p>2) Do not designate any specific areas for renewable energy technologies, and therefore consider any applications for the development of such technologies on a case-by-case basis.</p>	<p>There is an uncertainty as to whether renewable energy development would lead to any likely significant effects on European sites as locations of such development are not known.</p> <p>New renewable energy projects have the potential to impact designated sites through loss of habitat that is functionally linked to a European site, changes in water quality where sites are hydrologically linked to European sites, and disturbance to species as a result of construction activities/ operational stage.</p> <p>Option 1 could enable the Council to steer development away from sensitive sites through the designation of specific areas within the Local Plan; however, even where areas are designated there will be a requirement for individual project HRAs to be undertaken to fully assess the potential impacts from such development.</p> <p>Option 2 would require careful policy wording to ensure that inappropriate developments would not be considered if there was a potential for there to be a significant effect on a European site.</p> <p>Additional information would be required in relation to both of the proposed options in order to assess the significance of potential effects on the European sites. This would be considered further at the preferred options stage.</p>
<p>Policy 3: Sustainable Design and Construction</p>	<p>1) Require specific sustainable design and construction features or measures to be incorporated into new developments.</p> <p>2) Do not require any specific features or measures through policy.</p> <p>3) To require new development to contribute financially to a Community Energy Fund.</p>	<p>These policies are all associated with the design of new developments. These are statements of intent and aspirations. The implementation of these policies is not expected to have any implications on European sites and potentially some beneficial effects through for example, requiring developments to incorporate features to reduce the production of greenhouse gas emissions.</p> <p>The options associated with this Policy would not lead to effects upon European sites, and therefore whichever options are taken forward, they are likely to be Screened Out of the assessment at the preferred options stage.</p>
<p>Policy 4: Sustainable and healthy</p>	<p>1) Requirements for developments over</p>	<p>This policy and options set out</p>

Policy	Policy Options	Potential for Effect upon European Sites
places	<p>a certain size to incorporate features that encourage an active lifestyle for local residents and visitors.</p> <p>2) Requirements for developments over a certain size to provide direct connections from the development to the wider cycling and walking infrastructure.</p> <p>3) Requirements for residential developments over a certain size to incorporate public open space and amenity green space.</p>	<p>aspirations for sustainable and healthy living. Option 2 could lead to development in order to provide connections to the wider cycling and walking infrastructure. Such development is likely to be relatively small scale and considered unlikely to lead to an effect upon the European sites. However, this is not certain at this stage and it cannot be ruled out that implementation of this policy may have effects on European sites.</p> <p>Options 1 and 3 associated with this Policy would not lead to effects upon European sites, and they are likely to be Screened Out of the assessment at the preferred options stage. Option 2 would require further screening.</p>

5.6 Assessment of Social Policy Options

5.6.1 The Local Plan Review includes a topic paper covering a range of options for social policies to be addressed. Table 5 provides details of the proposed social policies with the associated options and identifies whether the policy as a whole or individual options within a policy have the potential for effects upon European sites to occur.

Table 5: Social Policy Options Screening

Policy	Policy Options	Potential for Effect upon European Sites
Policy 1: Affordable Housing	<p>1) Do nothing, i.e. have no policy on affordable housing.</p> <p>2) Continue with the 'usual' approach to affordable housing policy.</p> <p>3) If the 'percentage approach' is followed, carry on with a broadly similar policy to policy RS2 of the West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027.</p> <p>4) An affordable housing policy that contains more detail.</p> <p>5) Allocate specific sites for 100% affordable housing schemes</p> <p>6) Include 'permissive' policies for affordable housing.</p> <p>7) Provide a more flexible approach to how affordable housing is delivered with market housing developments.</p> <p>8) Have greater flexibility in what the Council defines as affordable housing.</p>	<p>This policy and options relates to how affordable housing can be incorporated into the housing allocations set out in Strategic Development Options. The implications for European sites will therefore be assessed under the Strategic Development Options and do not need to be repeated here.</p> <p>The options associated with this Policy would not lead to effects upon European sites, and therefore whichever options are taken forward, they are likely to be Screened Out of the assessment at the preferred options stage.</p>

Policy	Policy Options	Potential for Effect upon European Sites
<p>Policy 2: Demand for self- and custom-build housing</p>	<p>1) Do not allocate any sites for SCB housing (allow for such housing to be commissioned on allocated housing sites).</p> <p>2) Set aside a part of larger allocated housing sites for SCB plots.</p> <p>3) Identify and allocate small sites for SCB dwellings in line with demand.</p>	<p>Options 1 and 2 relate to how self- and custom-build housing can be incorporated into the housing allocations, they would not lead to additional development and therefore no effects upon European sites would occur as a result of these options without implementation of the Strategic Development Options.</p> <p>Options 1 and 2 (if taken forward) associated with this Policy would not lead to effects upon European sites and therefore whichever options are taken forward are likely to be Screened Out of the assessment at the preferred options stage.</p> <p>Option 3 has the potential for new sites to be allocated for development. Although likely to only comprise small numbers of houses, they could be located close to a Designated site, or on/adjacent to areas which could constitute functionally-linked land to a Designated site.</p> <p>Construction of new self-build homes has the potential to impact designated sites through loss of habitat functionally-linked to a Designated site, changes in water quality where sites are hydrologically linked to Designated sites, and disturbance to species as a result of construction activities/ operational stage.</p> <p>Further information would be required in relation to Option 3 (if it was taken forward) in order to assess the significance of potential effects on the European sites. This would be considered further at the preferred options stage.</p>

Policy	Policy Options	Potential for Effect upon European Sites
<p>Policy 3: Demand for alternative residential accommodation</p>	<p>1) Do nothing – allow market to provide accommodation through management of existing caravan sites and planning applications for expansion or intensification of sites (likely to be located within Green Belt).</p> <p>2) Allocate new sites, or land on the edge of existing sites, for additional caravan-based accommodation and mooring berths.</p> <p>3) As above, vary local Green Belt policy on a site-specific basis, to allow for expansion or intensification of residential caravan sites or mooring berths to meet identified need for such accommodation in West Lancashire.</p>	<p>This policy will lead to development in rural areas that may be in close proximity to Designated sites, or land which is functionally-linked to such sites.</p> <p>Construction of new alternative residential accommodation within the Green Belt has the potential to impact European sites through increased recreational pressure, loss of habitat functionally-linked to a Designated site, changes in water quality where sites are hydrologically linked to European sites, and disturbance to species as a result of construction activities/ operational stage.</p> <p>Additional information would be required in relation to all of the proposed options in order to assess the significance of potential effects on the European sites. This would be considered further at the preferred options stage.</p>
<p>Policy 4: The Skelmersdale housing market</p>	<p>1) Continue to relax, or further relax policy requirements for housing sites in Skelmersdale.</p> <p>2) Base the Local Plan Review strategy on the regeneration and expansion of Skelmersdale.</p>	<p>This policy and options relates to encouraging regeneration and expansion within Skelmersdale.</p> <p>Option 1 relates to policy requirements in relation to sites and those site allocations that would be considered within the Strategic Development Options. The implications for European sites will therefore be assessed under the Strategic Development Options and do not need to be repeated here.</p> <p>Option 1 associated with this Policy would not lead to effects upon European sites, therefore if this option is taken forward, it is likely to be Screened Out of the assessment at the preferred options stage.</p> <p>Option 2 could allow for the allocation of many / large sites in and around Skelmersdale for significant amounts of residential and employment development. Whilst development within and around Skelmersdale is considered likely to represent a lower risk to the European sites than expanding development in more rural areas of the Borough, the potential for</p>

Policy	Policy Options	Potential for Effect upon European Sites
		<p>LSE cannot be ruled out at this stage.</p> <p>Additional information would be required in relation to Option 2 in order to assess the significance of potential effects on the European sites. This would be considered further at the preferred options stage.</p>
<p>Policy 5: The social requirements of older people</p>	<p>1) A general 'sustainable development' policy.</p> <p>2) Allocate specific sites in appropriate locations for services and facilities.</p> <p>3) Prepare an Area Action Plan / Development Brief / Masterplan</p>	<p>Good access to shops, public transport, and medical facilities etc. is a social requirement older people. Option 1 relates to development or redevelopment within settlements, there is no impact pathway from the implementation of this option to the Designated sites.</p> <p>Option 1 associated with this Policy would not lead to effects upon European sites, and therefore if this option is taken forward, it is likely to be Screened Out of the assessment at the preferred options stage.</p> <p>Options 2 and 3 could allow for the allocation of new development sites, potentially outside existing urban areas and therefore the potential for LSE upon European sites cannot be ruled out at this stage.</p> <p>Additional information would be required in relation to Options 2 and 3 in order to assess the significance of potential effects on the European sites. This would be considered further at the preferred options stage.</p>

Policy	Policy Options	Potential for Effect upon European Sites
<p>Policy 6: Residential accommodation for older people</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Have no specific policy, but let the market deliver appropriate accommodation in line with local demand. 2) Continue with the 'percentage approach' of the current Local Plan. 3) In conjunction with the above, provide a tighter definition of what constitutes 'housing designed specifically to accommodate the elderly'. 4) Adopt one or both of the optional Technical Standards for new houses. 5) Require adherence to, or at least that regard be had to, the HAPPI (Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation) Design Principles. 6) Allocate specific sites for elderly accommodation. 7) Adopt the more general policy approach of promoting 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods'. 	<p>This policy and options relates to how residential accommodation for older people can be incorporated into the housing allocations set out in Strategic Development Options. The implications for European sites will therefore be assessed under the Strategic Development Options and do not need to be repeated here.</p> <p>The options associated with this Policy would not lead to effects upon European sites, and therefore whichever options are taken forward, they are likely to be Screened Out of the assessment at the preferred options stage.</p>
<p>Policy 7: Provision of Houses in Multiple Occupation in Ormskirk</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Expand the 'Article 4 area' and the area to which the HMO percentage policy applies, to include neighbouring settlements. 2) Revoke the Article 4 Direction and existing Local Plan policy RS3. 3) Decrease the HMO limit from current levels on all or specific streets to a lower percentage, potentially even down to 0%. 4) Increase the HMO limit from current levels on all or specific streets to a higher percentage. 	<p>This policy and options relates to controlling the conversion of dwellings into multi-occupancy housing. All of these options relate to development or redevelopment within a settlement, there is no impact pathway from the implementation of this policy to the European sites.</p> <p>The options associated with this Policy would not lead to effects upon European sites, and therefore whichever options are taken forward, they are likely to be Screened Out of the assessment at the preferred options stage.</p>
<p>Policy 8: Provision of off-campus purpose-built student accommodation in Ormskirk</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Continue with the current policy approach of restricting off-campus purpose-built student accommodation unless strict criteria are met. 2) Relax the current policy to allow purpose-built student accommodation away from the University Campus. 3) Allocate specific sites for off-campus student accommodation, whilst restricting 'unplanned' developments elsewhere. 4) Tighten the current policy to severely, or entirely, restrict off-campus, purpose-built student accommodation. 	<p>This policy could lead to development and it is not clear whether this would be focussed in urban or rural areas. Therefore, development may be in close proximity to European sites, or land which is functionally-linked to such sites.</p> <p>Construction of new student accommodation has the potential to impact European sites through increased recreational pressure, loss of habitat functionally-linked to a European site, changes in water quality where sites are hydrologically linked to European sites, and</p>

Policy	Policy Options	Potential for Effect upon European Sites
		<p>disturbance to species as a result of construction activities/ operational stage.</p> <p>Option 3 would allow the Council to direct off-campus development away from sensitive areas through allocating specific sites within the plan. This minimises the likelihood that sites which could lead to significant effects upon European sites would be chosen for development.</p> <p>Additional information would be required in relation to all of the proposed options in order to assess the significance of potential effects on the European sites. This would be considered further at the preferred options stage.</p>
<p>Policy 9: Delivering suitable accommodation for travellers</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Allow the travellers based at present in West Lancashire to stay on their (currently unauthorised) sites. 2) When allocating new sites for other developments in the Borough set aside part of those sites for travellers. 3) Compulsory Purchase of suitable sites in order to allocate them. 	<p>Evidence identified a need for 22 permanent traveller pitches in West Lancashire by 2033. The small scale of such a requirement and the likelihood that such sites would be located within reasonably close proximity to existing sites, or other urban areas would suggest that such sites are unlikely to have an impact upon European sites.</p> <p>The options associated with this Policy would not lead to effects upon European sites, and therefore whichever options are taken forward, they are likely to be Screened Out of the assessment at the preferred options stage.</p>

6 Conclusions

- 6.1.1 Sections 5.3 to 5.6 detail the various policies and options set out for consultation to feed into the review of the Local Plan. Whilst none of the Policies or options promote development within a European site, at this early stage of the process it is not always possible to fully determine the significance of potential effects.
- 6.1.2 The following paragraphs summarise the conclusions of the initial HRA Screening of the Policies and Options. Once the Options have been refined and preferred options identified along with proposed site allocations, a more detailed HRA Screening will be undertaken.

Strategic Development Options

- 6.1.3 The options set out within the Strategic Development Options paper include varying amounts of development per year and options for the length of time covered by the updated Local Plan.
- 6.1.4 The greater the amount of development proposed for each year of the Plan, the higher the likelihood that green field sites would be required to fulfil the requirements, and as such, the potential for likely significant effects could be greater.
- 6.1.5 In terms of the four spatial development scenarios, Scenario 3 provides for increased potential for development within rural areas, which are likely to be closer to the European sites within the borough, and leading to the loss of greater amounts of green field sites. Consequently, Scenario 3 is considered to have the highest risk of allocations proposed under it to have effects upon European sites, although further information pertaining to proposed allocations would be required before the likely significance of such effects could be fully established.
- 6.1.6 Scenarios 1, 2 and 4 all provide for focussing development within and adjacent to existing developed settlements, and as such, overall risks that new site allocations would lead to effects upon European sites are considered likely to be lower. However, until further details of proposed allocation sites under any of the scenarios are provided, the potential for significant effects upon European sites cannot be ruled out for any of the proposed scenarios.
- 6.1.7 The different length of time over which the Plan could be made is not considered likely to lead to significantly different conclusions being drawn upon the potential for development to affect European sites; however, a shorter Plan period would necessitate more frequent review of the HRA and therefore safeguard against unforeseen changes giving rise to new likely significant effects.

Economic Policy Options

- 6.1.8 The Economic Policy Options paper outlines six policies with associated options. Of these, implementation of any of the options associated with Policies 4 and 5 are considered unlikely to lead to effects upon European sites and it is likely that these would be screened out of the assessment at the preferred options stage, once the policy wording has been finalised. Whilst some of the options associated with the remaining four policies could also be screened out, others would require further details, such as scale and location, of proposed developments to enable a conclusion as to the potential for likely significant effects upon the European sites.

Environment Policy Options

- 6.1.9 The Environmental Policy Options paper outlines four policies with associated options. Of these, implementation of any of the options associated with Policies 1, 3 and 4 are considered unlikely to lead to effects upon European sites and it is likely that these would be screened out of the assessment at the preferred options stage, once the policy wording has been finalised. Further details, such as scale and location, of proposed renewable energy developments that could occur as a result of implementation of Policy 2 would be required to enable a conclusion as to the potential for likely significant effects upon the European sites. Careful policy wording should be considered if Option 2 is taken forward to ensure renewable energy developments are sited appropriately.

Social Policy Options

6.1.10 Finally, the Social Policy Options paper outlines nine policies with associated options. Of these, implementation of any of the options associated with Policies 1, 6, 7 and 9 are considered unlikely to lead to effects upon European sites and it is likely that these would be screened out of the assessment at the preferred options stage, once the policy wording has been finalised. Whilst some of the options associated with the remaining five policies could also be screened out, others would require further details, such as scale and location, of proposed developments to enable a conclusion as to the potential for likely significant effects upon the European sites.

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