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Hyndburn Borough Council

Sustainability Appraisal

Core Strategy

Non Technical Summary

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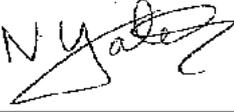
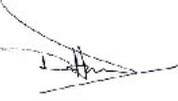


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Sustainability Appraisal

Core Strategy

Non Technical Summary

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Abbreviations

AAP	Area Action Plan
AQMA	Air Quality Management Area
BC	Borough Council
DPD	Development Plan Document
EA	Environment Agency
HMR	Housing Market Renewal
LDF	Local Development Framework
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
NTS	Non Technical Summary
SA	Sustainability Appraisal
SCS	Sustainable Community Strategy
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
SuD	Sustainable Drainage System

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Core Strategy

Hyndburn Borough Council (BC) is currently preparing its Local Development Framework (LDF) for the Borough, which will replace the Local Plan adopted in November 1996. The LDF will set out the Council's policies for spatial planning until 2026, and comprises a suite of Development Plan Documents (DPDs). The Core Strategy is the most important of these DPDs as it establishes the long-term framework for planning and development in the Borough. It identifies the nature and scale of housing and employment provision, together with the broad locations for new development. In addition, the document identifies key areas for regeneration, protection and enhancement. The Hyndburn Core Strategy will spatially represent the Council's wider Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS), and includes:

- A Vision for Hyndburn
- Strategic Objectives
- The Balanced Development Strategy
- Strategic Policies

1.2 Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment

The Core Strategy has the potential to have a wide range of significant sustainability effects (both positive and negative). As part of its development process, a combined Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is being undertaken. The term SA shall be used to refer to the combined SA/SEA for the remainder of this report.

There is a legal requirement for the Core Strategy to be subjected to SA, under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. SA is an essential tool for ensuring that the principles of sustainable development are inherent throughout the preparation of the Core Strategy and that it broadly complies and contributes to relevant planning guidance. The overarching aim of the process is to contribute to better decision-making and planning.

In accordance with good practice, the SA also incorporates the requirements of the SEA Directive. The aim of SEA is to *'provide for a high level of protection of the environment and to contribute to the integration of environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of plans and programmes with a view to promoting sustainable development'* (Article 1 of the SEA Directive). The combined SA/SEA ('the SA') has been undertaken in accordance with approved guidance.

By combining the SA and SEA processes, this SA considers environmental, social and economic issues and their interactions, thereby ensuring the principles of sustainable development are integrated into the development of the Core Strategy. The SA is an iterative process and follows a series of prescribed stages in which the elements of the Core Strategy are appraised against sustainability objectives to ensure the sustainability of the Core Strategy, i.e. to provide the best outcome for the human and natural environments now and into the future. Figure 1-1 presents these stages of the SA processes alongside the parallel stages in the development of the Core Strategy.

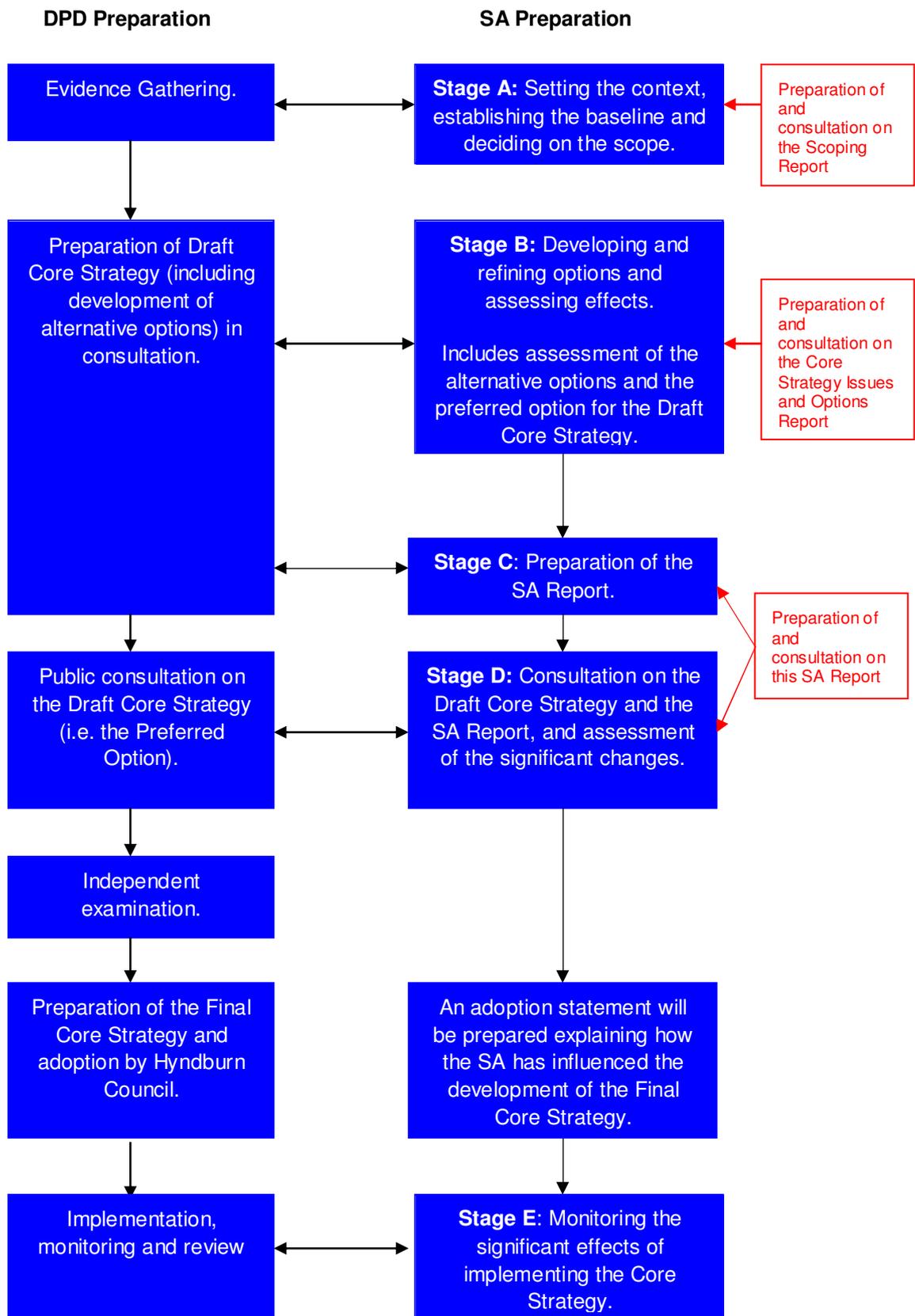


Figure 1-1 Key Stages in the Development of the Core Strategy and the SA

1.3 Purpose of the SA Report

Hyndburn BC is committed to preparing a Core Strategy that contributes to sustainable development. The Council wants to achieve a balance between economic growth, social progress and environmental quality. The principle of ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and in the future, lies at the heart of sustainable development.

The full SA Report (Hyder report reference 0020-NHR-NH50948-04) provides a summary of the SA process so far and presents the findings and recommendations of the assessment of the Core Strategy. This Non Technical Summary (NTS) provides a concise summary of the SA Report.

The SA Report will be used as a consultation document, issued to all statutory consultees and stakeholders for comment alongside the Final Hyndburn Core Strategy, and will also be made available to the public. **It is essential that the Core Strategy is read in conjunction with the SA Report.**

1.4 How to Have Your Say

Your comments are invited on the Core Strategy and the SA Report. Details of this process are set out in our Statement of Community Involvement which can be viewed at www.hyndburnbc.gov.uk

The Core Strategy and SA Report may be viewed via the following means:

- Planning Reception, Council Offices, Scaitcliffe House, Ormerod Street, Accrington, between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.
- On the Council's website www.hyndburnbc.gov.uk
- Paper copies are also available on request from the Planning Department, telephone 01254 380157 or e-mail planning@hyndburnbc.gov.uk.

You may make comments, using a copy of the attached comments form. In your response you may request to be notified of the adoption of the Core Strategy.

2 Existing Policy Background and Environmental Conditions

2.1 Plans, Programmes and Environmental Objectives

A review was undertaken of plans, policies and environmental objectives prepared at the international, national, regional, sub-regional and local levels to understand how they could influence the development of the Core Strategy and the SA process. A number of key themes relevant to the Core Strategy were identified. These were used to develop the sustainability objectives for the subsequent assessment.

2.2 Existing Environmental Conditions

A key part of the SA process was establishing the current social, economic and environmental conditions across the Borough. The aim of this was to determine the current situation, trends over time, key sensitive areas or populations, whether current problems are reversible, irreversible, permanent or temporary, and also significant cumulative effects.

The analysis of conditions across the Borough enabled the key sustainability issues and opportunities to be identified. Some of the main issues and opportunities are presented by broad topic area in Table 2-1.

SA Topic	Key Sustainability Issues	Key Sustainability Opportunities
Population	<p>High percentage of young people in certain wards of Hyndburn, which will have implications for provision of educational facilities, recreational facilities etc.</p> <p>Asian/Asian British the main ethnic minority and therefore there needs to be appropriate services provision for all members of the population in terms of education, housing etc.</p>	<p>There are opportunities to improve the supply of education, health and other community facilities in Hyndburn.</p>
Education and Qualifications	<p>Educational attainment is poorest in Barnfield, Central, Church and Springhill wards.</p> <p>There is a need to raise the overall aspirations of people living in the Borough and to stimulate more interest and emphasise the importance of educational qualifications to the population.</p>	<p>There is a need to improve educational attainment in the Borough. By improving levels of educational attainment there could be wider social benefits and improvements to the local economy.</p>
Human Health	<p>Life expectancy is lower than the national average and there is a need to reduce the incidence of diseases. Health inequalities need to be reduced.</p> <p>The high levels of teenage pregnancy have implications for health service provision, housing and educational attainment. The issue of teenage pregnancy is most problematic in the four wards of Barnfield, Central, Church and Springhill. Teenage pregnancy appears to be one element in a wider vicious circle associated with low aspirations of the young population.</p>	<p>Health improvements would benefit the economy and would enhance overall quality of life in the Borough.</p>
Water	<p>There are a large number of culverted watercourses in Hyndburn, which can occasionally impose constraints on future development.</p>	<p>Opportunities should be sought to de-culvert watercourses where appropriate to reduce the risk of flooding, to enhance water quality and the overall quality of the environment. There is a potential opportunity for this to be achieved as part of the Housing Market Renewal (HMR) Pathfinder scheme.</p> <p>Efforts should continue to restore and develop parts of the Leeds-Liverpool canal to provide tourism and environmental enhancements.</p>
Soil and Land Quality	<p>A variety of industrial land uses have potentially left behind contamination in the Borough.</p> <p>Although there is a Government emphasis upon redeveloping brownfield sites, the biodiverse nature of some brownfield sites must be acknowledged.</p>	<p>Opportunities should be sought to remediate areas of contamination, as part of any redevelopment and regeneration works.</p>

SA Topic	Key Sustainability Issues	Key Sustainability Opportunities
Air Quality	Whilst there are currently no Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) designated in Hyndburn, a potential future air quality issue has been identified at Clayton le Moors for nitrogen dioxide and congestion on the M65 has the potential to cause air quality problems.	Opportunities should be sought to reduce levels of traffic and promote the use of public transport.
Climatic Factors	A number of areas of Hyndburn lie within floodplains, particularly within Accrington Town Centre and neighbouring townships such as Church.	<p>Opportunities should be sought to de-culvert watercourses to both reduce flood risk and enhance the quality of the environment.</p> <p>New developments should be encouraged to use Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs) to manage runoff and further reduce flood risk.</p> <p>New developments should be encouraged to include sustainable design principles, energy efficiency and the incorporation of renewables e.g. the inclusion of solar panels and low carbon technologies. The carbon footprint of new development should be reduced.</p>
Biodiversity, Flora and Fauna	There are a number of designated sites for biodiversity within Hyndburn, the majority of which are located within the more rural areas.	<p>Efforts to regenerate and redevelop the Leeds Liverpool Canal should continue and opportunities to enhance biodiversity should be maximised.</p> <p>Opportunities should be sought to develop new Local Nature Reserves (LNR) to enhance the quality of the local environment and to improve quality of life.</p> <p>Opportunities should be sought to develop and enhance the network of public open space.</p>
Cultural Heritage	Hyndburn has a number of cultural heritage features, the majority of which are located within the more urban environment. Accrington town centre is important for its historic townscape and heritage value.	<p>All cultural heritage features should be preserved and enhanced.</p> <p>In addition to preserving statutory sites it is important to ensure that the wider historic landscape is protected and that cultural heritage issues are taken into consideration in all new developments.</p>
Landscape	The industrial heritage of the Borough is an important element of the townscape which must be maintained. Similarly the rural landscape should be protected for its importance as open countryside.	<p>It is essential that landscape character and quality is restored, maintained and enhanced.</p> <p>In addition to considering the wider strategic preservation of the Borough's landscape, opportunities should be sought to enhance design and landscaping at the local level to improve the quality of the local environment.</p> <p>Opportunities should be sought to promote the local character and distinctiveness to try and encourage inward investment and promote a niche market.</p>

SA Topic	Key Sustainability Issues	Key Sustainability Opportunities
Minerals and Waste	<p>One of the major strategic landfill sites for Lancashire is situated in the Borough. The transport implications must be managed carefully.</p> <p>Hyndburn is already performing well in terms of recycling and composting in comparison to other authorities in Lancashire.</p>	<p>Opportunities should be sought to further enhance performance.</p> <p>Sustainable sourcing and waste management principles should be promoted for all new developments that occur in the Borough.</p>
Transportation	<p>The Borough is well-connected by transport infrastructure and public transport links, including public transport, making Accrington and other central areas relatively accessible.</p>	<p>Opportunities should be sought to reduce dependence on the private car and increase public transport use.</p> <p>It will be important to ensure that any new employment sites can be easily accessed by public transport.</p> <p>The cycling and walking network in Hyndburn should be expanded and enhanced.</p>
Economy	<p>Retaining skilled members of the population is a problem for the local economy. There is a need to improve training levels to enhance the quality of the local workforce.</p> <p>There are high levels of economic inactivity.</p> <p>There is a need to improve the image of the Borough to encourage inward investment and to attract new business opportunities.</p>	<p>New employment development at Whitebirk is a significant employment opportunity for the Borough.</p> <p>Tourism is a potential economic opportunity for the Borough.</p> <p>The economy needs to be diversified to broaden the economic base and provide alternatives to the traditional manufacturing employment opportunities.</p> <p>The good transport links in the Borough need to be exploited and accessibility a key issue when deciding where to site new development.</p>
Deprivation and Living Environment	<p>Barnfield, Central, Church and Springhill wards are in the bottom 10% most deprived and therefore qualify for Neighbourhood Renewal Guidance and funding.</p> <p>Deprivation is a very complex issue and a number of different issues will need to be addressed for noticeable improvements to be realised.</p> <p>Although four key wards are more deprived than others it will be important to ensure that other areas also receive investment to prevent problems associated with alienation. There are pockets of deprivation in a number of the wards in the Borough.</p>	<p>There is a need to tackle anti-social behaviour, and crime rates should be further reduced to enhance overall quality of life.</p> <p>Access to sports facilities should be enhanced. This could have associated health benefits.</p>

SA Topic	Key Sustainability Issues	Key Sustainability Opportunities
Housing	<p>There are a high number of vacant, unfit and outmoded dwellings in the Borough.</p> <p>There is a very limited choice of housing with over 50% being terraced properties.</p> <p>House prices have gradually increased but incomes have not matched this rate of growth, which leads to problems of housing affordability.</p> <p>The number of people presenting themselves as homeless more than doubled between 2004 and 2007.</p>	<p>The Pathfinder presents a significant opportunity both to revitalise the housing stock and to improve quality of life.</p>

Table 2-1 Key Issues and Opportunities in Hyndburn Borough

3 The Assessment Methodology

3.1 Applying SA to the Core Strategy

The SA has been applied to the Core Strategy as follows:

- 1** The SA process commenced in October 2005, with the preparation of the Scoping Report for the SA of the LDF which was issued in June 2006. This set out the geographic scope of the SA, established baseline information and identified key sustainability issues and opportunities. The sustainability objectives were developed at this stage (see Section 3.2 below). The scoping stage also included a workshop with the SA Panel¹ to discuss sustainability issues and opportunities within Hyndburn, and to agree the sustainability objectives. The Scoping Report was issued to statutory consultees for the mandatory five-week period. Comments were incorporated into subsequent stages.
- 2** Alternative Strategic Options for the Core Strategy were developed by Hyndburn BC, and set out in the Core Strategy Issues and Options report. In March 2006, an SA Panel Workshop was held in order to determine the key strengths and weaknesses of the Core Strategy, to inform the preferred option to be taken forward. Subsequently in May 2006, an SA of the Core Strategy Issues and Options was undertaken in order to appraise the options against the sustainability objectives to inform the selection of a Preferred Option. This report was also issued for consultation and further comments duly carried forward.
- 3** Another SA panel workshop was held in June 2008 to undertake a review of the preferred option for the Core Strategy against broad sustainability topics. A number of recommendations were made, as reported in a Preferred Options Assessment Memo, and the Core Strategy was subsequently revised.
- 4** The preferred option was then subject to formal appraisal through the SA Process, the outcome of which was reported in the draft SA Report for the Core Strategy issued in July 2008. Informal consultation was conducted at this stage, to inform the developing Core Strategy. Responses lead to further refinements of the Core Strategy, and in April 2009 the SA process was used to help to refine the preferred option. In September 2009, the draft Core Strategy was slightly revised again. Before the draft SA Report could be updated accordingly, Hyndburn BC conducted a formal consultation on the draft Core Strategy and as a result the draft Core Strategy was revised again. A preliminary SA review of this revised Core Strategy was conducted and reported in an Interim Review Paper. In April 2010, the draft Core Strategy was then revised again. A Second Interim Review Paper was therefore produced to present the results of the key changes between the April 2010 Core Strategy and that reviewed previously in September 2009.
- 5** The appraisal of the Final Core Strategy is presented in the SA Report, of which this document is the Non-Technical Summary

¹ An independent sustainability panel was established to assist the SA process. The SA Panel consists of a multidisciplinary group of Hyndburn BC officers and stakeholders (Environment Agency (EA), the Wildlife Trust and independent environmental consultants (Hyder Consulting (UK) Limited)), providing expertise in a broad cross-section of issues including environmental protection, economic regeneration, housing, health and community.

3.2 Sustainability Objectives

As part of the scoping stage of the SA process, 22 sustainability objectives were devised to assess the sustainability performance of the Core Strategy, as listed in Table 3-1.

Sustainability Objectives	
1	To reduce crime, disorder and fear of crime
2	To improve levels of educational attainment for all age groups and all sectors of society
3	To improve physical and mental health for all and reduce health inequalities
4	To provide greater choice, quality and diversity of housing across all tenures to meet the needs of residents
5	To promote community spirit and cohesion and to provide opportunities for community involvement across all sectors of society
6	To maintain and improve access to basic goods, services and amenities for all groups
7	To encourage sustainable economic growth and business development across the borough
8	To develop the skills and training needed to establish and maintain a healthy labour market
9	To encourage economic inclusion
10	To deliver urban renaissance
11	To develop and market the borough as a place to live, work and do business
12	To protect and enhance biodiversity
13	To protect and enhance the borough's townscape character and quality
14	To protect and enhance the cultural heritage resource
15	To protect and enhance the quality of water features and resources
16	To guard against land contamination and encourage the appropriate re-use of brownfield sites within the urban boundary
17	To limit and adapt to climate change
18	To protect and improve air quality
19	To increase energy efficiency and require the use of renewable energy sources
20	To ensure the sustainable use of natural resources
21	To minimise waste, increase re-use and recycling
22	To promote the use of more sustainable modes of transport

Table 3-1 Sustainability Objectives

The SA aims to contribute to the achievement of the sustainability objectives, and, where there is conflict, provides mitigation measures to ensure that development is carried out in the most sustainable manner. Each of the elements of the Core Strategy have been assessed against the sustainability objectives.

3.3 Assessment of Alternatives

The assessment of the Core Strategy through the SA has been undertaken in two key stages:

- 1 An assessment of six Core Strategy options developed in 2006.
- 2 An assessment of additional alternatives for the Core Strategy in 2008.

3.3.1 2006 Alternative Options Assessment

During 2006, the six alternative options were developed by Hyndburn BC, each one focusing on a different approach to development:

- 1 Concentrate on housing market renewal
- 2 Keep new housing within towns
- 3 Focus on jobs
- 4 Concentrate growth into one place
- 5 A place to live in
- 6 Let developers take the lead

A 'No Core Strategy Scenario' was also considered to provide a benchmark against which the performance of other options could be judged.

The options were assessed against the sustainability objectives to determine the extent to which they would contribute to sustainable development. This assessment was informed by a SA panel workshop. The results of this assessment were documented in an Options Assessment Report in May 2006.

The assessment demonstrated that none of the options in isolation would provide for sustainable development within the Borough. Therefore the SA recommended that a new option was developed that sought to include key elements and strengths of each of the options, to ensure more balanced economic growth and social and environmental regeneration in the Borough.

3.3.2 2008 Alternative Options Assessment

Following consultation on the 2006 alternative options, Hyndburn BC began to develop the Preferred Core Strategy Option, which also led to the identification of two further alternatives:

- An employment-led strategy, where priority would be to retain existing businesses and attract new higher order employment uses into the Borough.
- A housing-led strategy, where priority would be given to increasing the range and amount of housing in the borough.

These alternative options were discounted by the Council after being deemed unsuitable for the Borough. However, to ensure all elements of the Core Strategy have been assessed, they have been subjected to the SA process and assessed against the broad sustainability topics.

The assessment demonstrated that neither option in isolation would be in the best interests of delivering a sustainable Borough. Both options would not contribute to the creation of

sustainable communities, or provide for the needs of all communities within Hyndburn. It was therefore recommended that a more hybrid approach would be beneficial to ensure a balance between employment and housing provision that meets the needs of the communities particularly in urban areas.

3.4 Assessment of the Final Draft Core Strategy

The following elements of the Core Strategy have been assessed against the sustainability objectives:

- The Vision for Hyndburn
- Strategic Objectives
- The Balanced Development Strategy
- Thematic Policies on Economy, Education, Housing, Health, Environment and Accessibility
- The Area-Based Policies that apply to specific settlements and the rural areas of the Borough

Following the assessment, recommendations have been made to improve the sustainability of each element of the Core Strategy, for example to offset or alleviate any adverse impacts that have been predicted, or to suggest opportunities for additional enhancements.

4 The Results of the SA Process

4.1 The Vision for Hyndburn

The Vision for Hyndburn aims to establish Hyndburn's role within the Pennine Lancashire sub-region as a distinctive, prosperous and vibrant area, providing a much sought after lifestyle to current and prospective residents. The importance of sustainable economic growth and the provision of housing to meet the needs of the Borough, together with overall regeneration, are clearly brought out within the Vision. In addition, a range of other topic areas are mentioned in the Vision covering sustainable transport, adaptation to the effects of climate change, social inclusion, education, health and wellbeing, and the natural and built environment.

The Vision has been strengthened throughout the development of the Core Strategy, and is therefore considered to fully contribute to all of the sustainability objectives. There are therefore no recommendations for improvement.

4.2 The Strategic Objectives

Collectively the Strategic Objectives of the Core Strategy contribute to the achievement of the sustainability objectives. Whilst the assessment did not identify any significant areas of weakness, some areas of uncertainty were identified in relation to how new development in the Borough could impact upon the built and natural environment.

However, it is considered that the Strategic Objectives together positively contribute to all the SA Objectives in some way. There are therefore no recommendations for improvement.

4.3 The Balanced Development Strategy

The Balanced Development Strategy is the preferred strategy that has been developed from the alternative options. The Strategy outlines the preferred spatial option for Hyndburn, setting out the broad spatial aspects of the Core Strategy. It comprises broad geographical areas for development, although this will be developed in much greater detail in the Site Allocations DPD to follow, together with a high level description of the proposed distribution of development. The Balanced Development Strategy is supported by the Strategic Policies of the Core Strategy.

Overall, it is considered that the Balanced Development Strategy provides a clear plan for the direction of change in Hyndburn. The Strategy concentrates development primarily within existing urban areas, which would deliver sustainability benefits in terms of access to services, the uptake of sustainable transport and support for existing local businesses. The Strategy focuses upon economic growth and high quality housing development that supports the ongoing HMR programme, whilst attempting to preserve and enhance the Borough's natural and built environment. The principle of urban concentration and a focus on key regeneration areas indicates that it will seek to address the most pressing socio-economic issues within the Borough. However, it could be more specific on the role of Accrington town centre as the primary retail and commercial centre of the Borough, and make a link to the regeneration priorities within this area.

The Strategy makes provisions for developments on Greenfield land, including some small-scale intrusions into the Green Belt, which are considered to be strategic developments (e.g. at Huncoat and Altham). However, policies within the Core Strategy will ensure that the potential environmental impacts of general growth and more specific development proposals for Greenfield sites are mitigated.

Development and regeneration will inevitably cause increases in the consumption of natural resources, energy and water, with consequent impacts on carbon emissions and climate change. Additional traffic is likely to be generated, which could contribute to increased greenhouse gas emissions, and greater volumes of waste are likely to be generated. Specific policies also seek to manage the impacts of growth on the urban fabric of the Borough, including the promotion of energy efficiency, public transport and sustainable design.

4.4 The Thematic Policies

The thematic policies support the delivery of the Balanced Development Strategy with policies and commentary in the following themes:

- Economy
- Education
- Housing
- Health
- Environment
- Accessibility

The overall regeneration theme runs through many of the thematic policies, in support of the Balanced Development Strategy. Collectively, the thematic policies would seek to address the majority of sustainability issues within the Borough, as identified in the review of baseline information. The policies on the whole are comprehensive with only a few potential negative effects identified. The strengths of the Core Strategy lie within its direct aims for environmental improvements, sustainable economic development and provision of a greater choice and quality of housing in sustainable locations within Hyndburn, which could benefit crime, education and skills development, health and wellbeing, and community spirit and cohesion in the long-term. Regeneration initiatives will be concentrated in the highest priority areas within the urban boundary in line with the HMR programme. The Core Strategy seeks to ensure that housing and employment development would be appropriate to the scale and function of the area.

Brownfield sites are prioritised for redevelopment, which would have positive impacts upon the townscape of Accrington and its adjoining townships, and ensure that the more rural areas are largely safeguarded. The Core Strategy contains clear policies to ensure the protection and enhancement of the natural and built environment. In addition, new green infrastructure is promoted, which could contribute to multiple sustainability benefits such as improved visual amenity, recreation opportunities, health and wellbeing benefits and an overall improved quality of life.

Urban concentration, coupled with provisions to improve connectivity, would help to reduce the need to travel and thus lower carbon emissions and improve air quality within the Borough. The issues of climate change, sustainable design and renewable energy are addressed through the environment policies of the Core Strategy.

Although collectively, the thematic policies perform positively against many of the sustainability objectives, a number of recommendations have been made to further enhance the sustainability performance of the Core Strategy. These can be referred to in the SA Report.

4.5 The Area-Based Policies

The area-based policies support the delivery of the Balanced Development Strategy with policies and commentary in the following themes:

- Accrington and its Townships

- Great Harwood
- Rishton
- Knuzden and Whitebirk
- The Rural Areas

Collectively, the area-based policies would positively contribute to the majority of sustainability Objectives. Housing and employment development would be targeted within the urban areas of Accrington town centre and to a lesser extent in the other towns within the Borough, and therefore within the areas most at need where deprivation is highest. Such development, together with overall environmental regeneration and improved services would contribute to urban renaissance and could generate indirect benefits in relation to health, crime and community spirit and cohesion within the long-term. These improvements to the urban environment in Accrington and its townships, together with other towns, are likely to have a beneficial effect upon the perception of the area for residents, visitors and potential investors.

The provision of a greater choice and quality of new housing (3400 new houses), in association with Policies H1-3, would help to create a healthier living environment for many people currently living in poor quality or unsuitable accommodation. In addition, the integrity of rural communities will be maintained by the Core Strategy's provisions to prevent inappropriate development within rural areas.

The Core Strategy seeks to ensure that whilst Accrington town centre remains key to the delivery of sustainable economic growth and services in the Borough, appropriate local services and employment opportunities are provided in other townships and towns within the Borough to ensure the development of sustainable communities. Great Harwood is promoted as the Borough's second centre, providing key local services and specialist/leisure shopping facilities at an appropriate scale, which would contribute to sustainable economic growth and business development opportunities in the medium-long term. Other outer area employment sites are promoted through the Core Strategy, such as the Regional Employment Site at Whitebirk, the proposed Strategic Employment Site (which would be developed as a Waste Technology Park) at Huncoat, and Altham Business Park, thereby encouraging long-term sustainable economic growth and business development in Hyndburn and potentially outside the Borough. The creation of employment opportunities, together with improved connectivity (particularly via sustainable modes such as walking and cycling), would directly contribute to improved access to services and employment at a local level and therefore economic inclusion. Training and up-skilling opportunities would be realised, and the Accrington and Rossendale College would play a role in raising educational standards to meet the needs of modern businesses.

Although the area-based policies generally support the redevelopment of brownfield sites, thus preventing large-scale loss of greenfield land, some proposed development would be within Greenfield land and/or Green Belt, which could potentially generate negative impacts upon biodiversity and potentially upon surface water runoff and water resources. However, the environment themed policies provide requirements for the protection of the natural environment and high quality design standards.

The area-based policies would also contribute to the sustainability objectives relating to the townscape and cultural heritage resources, by seeking to protect and enhance the local character and heritage features (such as the Leeds and Liverpool Canal) of the Hyndburn countryside, which is an important amenity for local residents, contributes to a sense of place and is important for promoting the Borough. However, there is potential for adverse impacts upon landscape / townscape at the edge of urban areas, as a result of development within Greenfield land and on Green Belt, and also as a result of larger semi-detached and detached housing provision within Rishton. It is acknowledged though that the environmental themed policies of the Core Strategy contain provisions for the protection of the existing quality and character of landscapes and townscapes, and specifically seek to ensure preservation and enhancement of local character, identity, heritage and vitality.

The Core Strategy contains provisions to ensure that developments are of high quality and promote sustainable design and construction, ensure a balanced approach to adapting to and limiting the effects of climate change (such as flooding and greenhouse gas emissions), and also ensure energy efficiency, the use of renewable energy and sustainable use of natural resources. However, it is acknowledged that development could contribute to an increased pressure upon existing resources.

Targeted development within existing urban areas of Accrington and its townships would support the SA Objective relating to sustainable transport. New development would be located close to public transport and walking and cycling routes, thus minimising travel and dependence on the private car. This would generate indirect benefits upon local air quality in the long-term through a potential reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, although it is recognised that the scale of development planned will lead to inevitable increases in car use despite the proposals to encourage the use of sustainable transport. In addition, the development of a bus station would ensure that bus and train services and properly integrated, thereby improving access and promoting the use of more sustainable modes of transport. However, the construction of the Whinney Hill link road, together with the development of outer area employment opportunities, would not positively support the sustainability objective relating to sustainable transport.

Although collectively, the area-based policies perform positively against many of the sustainability objectives, a number of recommendations have been made to further enhance the sustainability performance of the Core Strategy. These can be referred to in the SA Report.

4.6 Cumulative Impacts

The combined impacts of the Core Strategy with the impact of other plans and programmes (e.g. the ongoing HMR and the Town Centre Masterplan Area Action Plan (AAP)) have been assessed. The policies within the Core Strategy tend to be complementary and to contribute positively overall to sustainability objectives when considered together. Cumulative benefits are identified on crime and the fear of crime, education and skills attainment / training provision, health, housing, community spirit, access to services, sustainable economic growth and inclusion, biodiversity, townscape and landscape quality, climate change, air quality, energy efficiency and natural resources.

There are some potential concerns centred on the combined impacts of various developments on biodiversity, air quality and adaptation to climate change. Development and overall regeneration is also likely to generate greater volumes of waste and increase pressure upon natural resources. Along the urban edge, and close to the boundaries, of the Borough, there may be cumulative impacts on landscape character and also upon community spirit and cohesion.

Mitigation measures are proposed for individual policies which, if successfully implemented, would reduce the potential for cumulative impacts to occur.

5 Monitoring

Once the Core Strategy is implemented, its significant impacts need to be monitored. Monitoring will be used to identify the performance of the Core Strategy, identify undesirable effects, and confirm whether the impacts predicted in the assessment were accurate.

The monitoring framework for the Core Strategy is presented in the SA Report, and defines:

- The potentially significant effects that need to be monitored
- How the effect should be monitored
- A target that should be achieved
- Where data could be obtained from
- How often the monitoring data should be gathered