

# Sustainability Appraisal of Wigan Local Development Framework

## What does Sustainability Appraisal Involve?

In this leaflet we have summarised the key issues for Wigan's environment, communities and economy. We will be using this information to help us write a new plan for shaping land use and development in the borough called the Local Development Framework.

## Development in Wigan

The way we want Wigan to develop will be set out in our Local Development Framework. This framework will set out things like where we want our new housing and employment sites to go, where we won't allow development (like on wildlife habitats), and what types of development we want (an example might be better energy efficiency in new buildings).

It is very important that we make sure our Local Development Framework will help us to protect the environment, whilst helping everyone to have a better quality of life, and strengthening the economy.

Trying to get the balance right between environmental, social and economic issues is often referred to as "sustainable development".

This means treating the earth with respect so that it is in a healthy state for future generations. It also means creating a fairer world where everyone is able to meet their basic needs and inequalities are reduced.

Sustainable development is a big challenge for us all, but we can make a real difference in Wigan through the Local Development Framework.

But, if we are to make our activities more "sustainable" then we need to know the effects of what we are doing or plan to do. Sustainability appraisals are a useful tool for this.

## Why carry out sustainability appraisals?

We are required by law to carry out sustainability appraisals on our Local Development Framework.

Doing a sustainability appraisal will help us to check what effect our plans and proposals will have on the environment, the economy and our lives in general. It will also help us to compare different options to see which are the most sustainable overall. The process has several parts, starting with the "scoping" stage. This involves us gathering information about the issues we face in the borough, so that we know what things we need to focus our attention on the most. We have now completed the scoping stage for Wigan's sustainability appraisal of the Local Development Framework.



## What have we done so far?

We have gathered evidence about the existing environmental, social and economic conditions in the Borough. Some examples of this are how many people are unemployed, how much crime there is, and how affordable homes are.

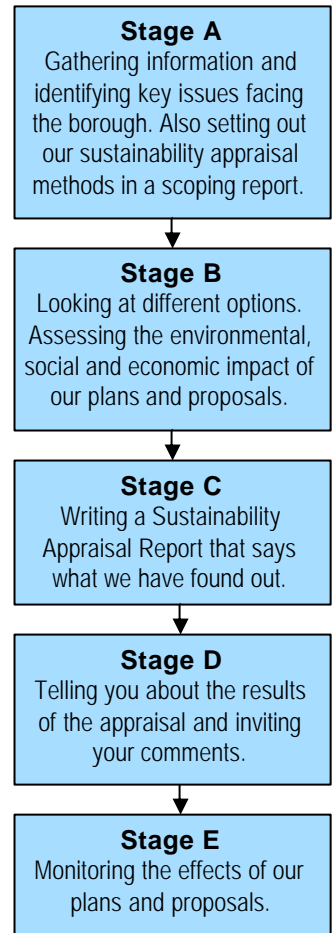
We have used information like this to identify the sustainability issues for Wigan. These are listed on pages 2-3 of this leaflet.

We have used the list of sustainability issues to set-up a checklist, which we will use to look at the effects of our Local Development Framework. You can find this checklist on page 4.

As well as this summary leaflet, we have produced a Scoping Report, which contains much more detail about what we have done so far.

We have also produced a set of topic papers, each of which contains more detail about the existing conditions in the Borough, and any related issues. The full Scoping Report, along with the 14 topic papers can all be downloaded from the Council's Website at the following address:

[www.wigan.gov.uk/Services/Planning/Policies/DevelopmentFramework/SustainabilityAppraisal.htm](http://www.wigan.gov.uk/Services/Planning/Policies/DevelopmentFramework/SustainabilityAppraisal.htm)



# Sustainability Issues

We identified the sustainability issues facing the borough by:

- reviewing relevant plans, policies and other important documents;
- collecting data held by the council and other organisations; and
- holding a series of workshops at the Local Strategic Partnership's annual conference (which was about sustainability and climate change).

## Biodiversity and nature conservation

The evidence tells us that It is important to value and protect the borough's environmental assets because of their value to wildlife, recreation, resilience to climate change, health and wellbeing.

However, there is still pressure for new development, which could have negative impacts on biodiversity, because it is recognised that there is not enough land available to meet demand.

Wildlife and habitat surveys need to be updated to gain a better understanding of our position.

## Natural Resources and Pollution

Climate change threatens to increase existing flood risks.

The biological quality of some of our rivers is also "not very good", and this is a problem for some important wildlife species.

Air quality is generally very good in the Borough, but it can be poor along main roads, and cause health problems.

The evidence tells us that we should use our soil and mineral resources wisely.

## Built environment and Landscapes

Our built environment must be designed sustainably to help us prepare for and tackle climate change. This means improving resource efficiency, using sustainable materials in construction, creating attractive places to live and encouraging sustainable behaviours.

Another problem in Wigan is the amount of derelict land. Which remains significant despite reductions.

## Community Safety and neighbourhoods

There is a large and increasing gap in crime between the most deprived areas and the rest of the borough; fear of crime remains a problem too.

The evidence tells us that cleanliness, environmental quality and feeling safe are key issues for people in their neighbourhoods. Rubbish and litter is a particular problem.

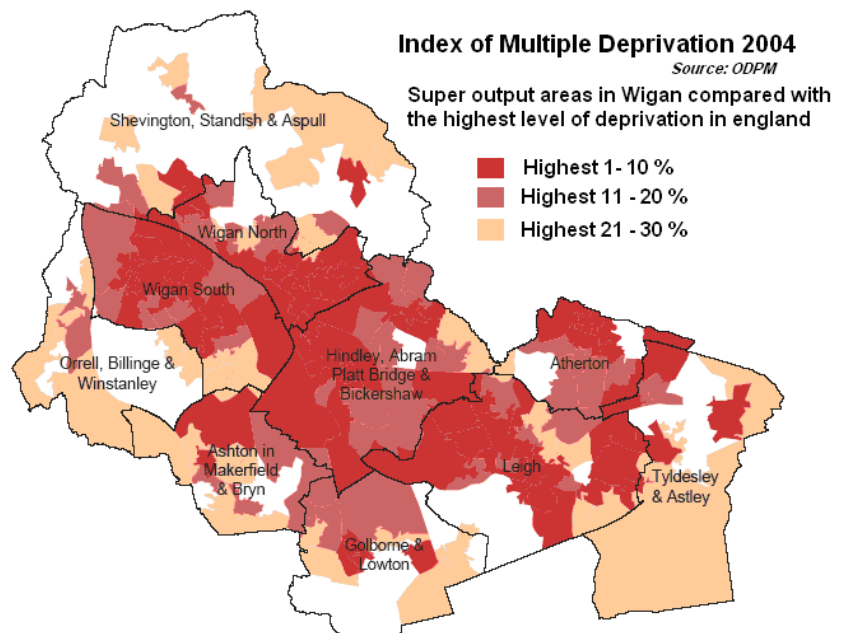
## Education and Learning

There are low levels of basic skills and qualifications in Wigan, which affects employment opportunities. This problem is worse in the most deprived parts of the Borough.

Some buildings are also inadequate for learning and climate change. They are located, designed and resourced poorly. Plans to spend money on schools presents an opportunity to tackle these issues.

## Health

The Borough has low life-expectancy and multiple health problems. People from certain parts of the



borough are also more likely to suffer problems. There is also a very low level of physical activity in the borough with many residents doing no activity at all that would benefit their health.

## Recreation and Leisure

Although Wigan has a lot of open and green space, we have identified that there is a lack of quality spaces and playing fields.

Young people also feel that there is "nothing for them to do", and a lot of adults perceive "teenagers hanging around the streets" to be a problem.

## Waste

Wigan, like other local authorities, is facing challenging waste targets from Government. However, the amount of waste we are producing is rising, and this trend needs to be reversed.

We are recycling and composting more than ever before. However, we need to make even better use of waste by re-using it, recycling more and using waste for energy production.

## Community development

Community “togetherness” is not strong, particularly in deprived areas, with people from different backgrounds not integrating well. This situation could be worsened by an increased number of economic migrants moving to the Borough and in the long term, environmental migrants as a result of climate change.

## Sustainable Housing

Although households in Wigan are amongst the cheapest in the country, they are becoming less affordable.

It is vital that new households are designed to a high standard and using sustainable methods. The existing stock also needs to be upgraded to reduce environmental impacts, fuel poverty and adapt to climate change.

Fuel Poverty continues to be a major issue due to the relatively low incomes in the borough.

## Sustainable Transport

There are recognised problems of congestion and high levels of car use in the borough. These issues need to be tackled in a sustainable way.

It is important to reduce the need to travel (particularly by car) as this will help reduce carbon dioxide emissions, reduce congestion, and improve health and wellbeing.

We also need to encourage and enable more sustainable travel by improving public transport and facilities for cyclists and pedestrians.

## Energy

Future trends in energy supply and climate change make it imperative for us to reduce the amount of energy we use and to use energy more efficiently.

We are also being encouraged heavily to make much greater use of renewable sources of energy (*like wind turbines, solar panels and biomass*) at all levels, including on individual buildings & houses and district heat and power systems.



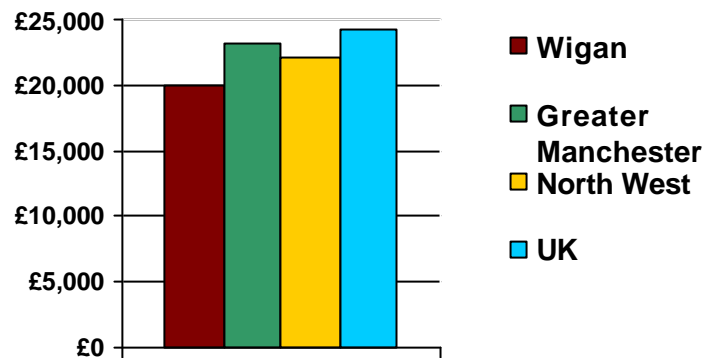
## Economy and Employment

The borough does not have enough land for business development. This issue is made worse by the need to protect the borough's environmental assets at no net loss.

The knowledge economy is not particularly strong in the Borough and needs to be strengthened. There are also opportunities to exploit growing markets associated with environmental protection and climate change.

Low wages are fairly common and there are limited employment prospects arising from a lack of appropriate skills and qualifications.

### Mean gross wage of employees in 2006



## Cross cutting issues

### Climate Change

Climate change has been identified as a priority issue for local authorities to tackle. The impacts associated with climate change have been identified as part of all the key issues discussed in this summary.

### Deprivation / inequalities

A recurring theme amongst the evidence we gathered was that pockets of deprivation occur throughout the Borough. These areas are likely to suffer most from the issues outlined in this summary and require greater attention, resources and action to reduce such inequalities

### Sustainable lifestyles

If everyone on the planet lived like we do in Wigan we would need almost three Earths to support the current world population. We are also contributing to climate change and other global problems with our daily activities.

We need to address this by raising the awareness of and changing the attitudes and practices of businesses, organisations and the public, so that they become more sustainable.

Buying local food and goods from sustainable sources, reducing waste and resource use and using more sustainable forms of transport are all things we need to tackle urgently.

# Sustainability Objectives for Wigan:

The proposals and policies that make up the Local Development Framework will be appraised against the sustainability objectives listed below. These objectives take account of all the evidence we gathered at the scoping stage, with an emphasis on climate change and the sustainability issues outlined in this leaflet.

Each objective is supported by several detailed questions that will help us focus the appraisal on the most important issues. You can view these detailed questions and the evidence we gathered in the full Scoping Report and supporting topic papers. These are available to view or download on the Councils Website:

[www.wigan.gov.uk/Services/Planning/Policies/DevelopmentFramework/SustainabilityAppraisal.htm](http://www.wigan.gov.uk/Services/Planning/Policies/DevelopmentFramework/SustainabilityAppraisal.htm)

**1. Biodiversity:** To protect and enhance the Borough's biodiversity and wildlife habitats.



**2. Air quality:** To protect and improve local air quality.



**3. Soil and minerals:** To preserve and enhance the Borough's soil and mineral resources.



**4. Water:** To ensure sustainable and integrated management of the Borough's water resources.



**5. Landscapes & countryside:** To maintain and enhance the character and quality of the Borough's landscapes and countryside.



**6. Built Environment:** To ensure high quality, sustainable design in all developments, whilst protecting, enhancing and capitalising on the borough's historic environment.



**7. Community Safety:** To reduce crime, disorder, drug use and the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour, particularly in our priority neighbourhoods and other "hotspots".



**8. Neighbourhood quality:** To protect and improve the environmental quality of neighbourhoods, particularly those with high levels of deprivation.



**9. Waste:** To address the waste hierarchy by: minimising waste as a priority, then reusing, recycling, composting and recovering for energy, before finally seeking disposal.



## 10. Health and wellbeing:

To protect and improve physical and mental health, improve access to good quality health care and encourage healthy lifestyles, particularly in the most deprived parts of the Borough.



**11. Recreation:** To provide increased opportunities for engagement in cultural, leisure and recreational activities.



## 12. Sustainable Housing:

To ensure access for all to good quality, affordable housing that is sustainably designed, built and maintained.



## 13. Education & Learning:

To improve educational and vocational achievement, ensuring a culture of life-long learning that allows people to fulfil their duties and potential in a global society.



## 14. Community development:

To effectively involve local communities in decision making, build community capacity & encourage a sense of community identity and welfare that embraces diversity & equality of opportunity.



**15. Energy:** To ensure the borough has a secure supply of energy that meets current and future needs and minimises our contribution to climate change.



**16. Accessibility:** To develop transport, telecommunications and economic infrastructure so as to encourage efficient patterns of movement, less need to travel and improvements in the choice and use of sustainable transport modes.



## 17. Sustainable Economy:

To aim for a more sustainable local economy that is built on knowledge-based, socially responsible and environmentally progressive industry and commerce.



## 18. Economy & employment:

To ensure a thriving and prosperous borough of high employment and economic activity that benefits everyone.

