



**Wigan Local Plan  
Core Strategy**

**Sustainability Appraisal  
Non-Technical Summary**

**Wigan Council  
June 2013**

# Introduction

**This is a non-technical summary of a sustainability appraisal that outlines the economic, social and environmental impacts of our Core Strategy. It also illustrates how our sustainability appraisal has helped to shape the Core Strategy as it developed.**

## Core Strategy

### WHAT IF WE HAD NO CORE STRATEGY?

The borough would still develop in the absence of the Core Strategy but there would clearly be areas of concern that would prevent the borough from developing in a more sustainable way.

The absence of a number of the policies contained within the Core Strategy would be detrimental to progress in a number of key areas covering all aspects of sustainability – economic, environmental and social.

The Core Strategy is the principal development plan document in our Local Development Framework. It sets out what development is needed in the next 10-15 years, where this will go and how it can be achieved. For the most part, the details will be determined in other policy documents that will make up the Local Development Framework.

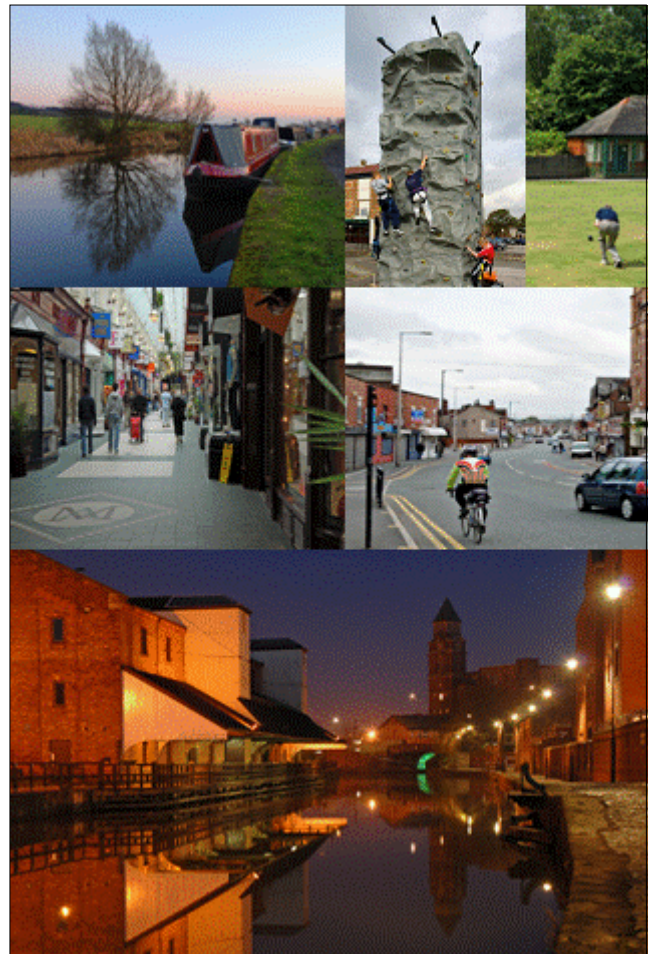
These will include site allocations plans, area action plans and supplementary planning documents. All of these other documents will have to conform to the Core Strategy. Therefore, the Core Strategy sets the principles and the policies for planning in the borough.

## Sustainability Appraisal

We carried out the sustainability appraisal to help ensure that the economic, social and environmental implications of the Core Strategy were identified, considered and well-balanced.

To make sure we concentrate on the most important sustainability issues for the borough, we collected lots of evidence and consulted widely to help inform and back-up our decisions.

We also considered a range of options for how the borough should develop; comparing how 'sustainable' these different approaches would be to find out what the best way forward for Wigan might be. Once we had identified the 'preferred' options we carried out more detailed appraisals of the environmental, social and economic impacts of our finalised plan.



### STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The Strategic Environmental Assessment requirements set out lots of different things that we must address such as the structure of the report; details on the characteristics, the state of the local environment and any problems there may be; the likely effects of the strategy on the environment; our objectives; how we assess the impacts and how we plan to monitor the significant environmental effects. We believe our Sustainability Appraisal meets these requirements.

# Different stages of the Sustainability Appraisal

Sustainability appraisal involves several important tasks. At the first stage, called 'scoping', we collected lots of evidence to help us to identify the key issues facing the borough. This allowed us to establish a framework of sustainability objectives, which we then used as a basis for appraising our Core Strategy. We developed a number of options for tackling these issues to explore what would be the best approach for Wigan. Our sustainability appraisal and the comments we received from key stakeholders helped us to develop our preferred options and draft plan.

## scoping Sep 2007

Sets out the context and objectives of the Sustainability Appraisal having collected the baseline information, analysed relevant plans and programmes, identified the sustainability issues and established a framework for appraising the Core Strategy

## issues and options Jan 2009

This was a stage of the core Strategy which set out the issues facing the borough and the available options for development. The Sustainability Appraisal considered these options against the sustainability objectives

## preferred options May 2009

This stage set out the Council's preferred spatial options and policy principles for the Core Strategy. These were appraised against the sustainability objectives and all sustainability issues considered.

## proposed submission Feb 2011

This was the final formal consultation stage before submission and the documentation set out what the Council wished to submit to the Inspector. All elements had been sustainability appraised.

## submission Aug 2011

This was the final set of documentation which was submitted to the Inspector and was subsequently Examined in Public. The Sustainability Appraisal had analysed and supported the proposals and policies it contained.

## shortfall in housing land Jul 2012

The Inspector identified a shortfall in housing land in the borough and so the spatial options and broad site options were considered to help address this shortfall. These sites were appraised according to the sustainability objectives.

## submission Jan 2013

All elements of the Sustainability Appraisal are brought together as another final submission to the Inspector. We took the opportunity at this stage to review the Sustainability Appraisal to ensure we had included all relevant documentation

## final document June 2013

Following an Examination in Public, the Planning Inspector issued his recommendations for changes to the Core Strategy. These changes were appraised and the Sustainability Appraisal was amended accordingly.

# Key Sustainability Issues

## Tackling and adapting to climate change

Action to mitigate such emissions is needed across all aspects of our lives if we are to move towards a low-carbon society and help to tackle climate change. We also need to prepare for the unavoidable effects of climate change, which are likely to be an issue for many of the borough's residents, our wildlife and the economy. Sustainable design, green infrastructure and sustainable drainage systems all have an important role to play.

## Inefficient use of resources

We need to use energy, water, land and other resources much more efficiently if we are to tackle climate change, fuel poverty and increasing scarcity of non-renewable resources. We need to rethink our approach to energy provision and use as well as waste production.

## Environmental protection

Cleanliness, environmental quality and feeling safe are key issues for people in their neighbourhoods. It is also crucial to protect and enhance the wider 'environment' as it holds important functions for wildlife, recreation, resilience to climate change and health and well-being.



## Deprivation and inequalities

People living in deprived parts of the borough are more likely to suffer from a range of problems, such as: higher crime rates, worklessness, poorer standards of health, poor qualifications and poorer access to cultural and leisure facilities.

## Unhealthy lifestyles

Whilst there are significant differences across the borough, life-expectancy is also low and incidences of multiple health problems are high. There are generally low levels of physical activity.



## Economic growth

The borough's economy is under-performing with low productivity, an over reliance on traditional sectors and an under-developed and undersized knowledge economy. There is a high degree of long term unemployment and high numbers of incapacity benefit claimants. There is a poor perception of Wigan as a business location, a shortfall of high quality employment accommodation and infrastructure constraints.

## Congestion and unsustainable travel and transport

There is a strong consensus that the borough is congested, especially at peak times. This is largely due to the fact that our infrastructure needs strengthening and the predominant mode of transport is the private car, with low levels of cycling, walking and public transport use. Patterns of movement are generally unsustainable too, with many people travelling outside the borough to work by car.

# Sustainability Objectives

Following consultation we developed a set of 18 sustainability objectives against which we would measure the spatial and core policies of the Core Strategy. Full details of the sustainability framework and the appraisals can be found in the main Sustainability Appraisal Report and its appendices

1. To protect and enhance the borough's biodiversity and wildlife habitats.
2. To protect and improve local air quality.
3. To preserve and enhance the borough's soil and mineral resources.
4. To ensure sustainable and integrated management of the Borough's water resources.
5. To preserve and enhance the borough's landscapes, countryside and green spaces.
6. To ensure high quality, sustainable design in all developments whilst respecting, enhancing and capitalising on the borough's historic environment.
7. To address the waste hierarchy by: minimising waste as a priority, then reusing, recycling, composting and recovering for energy, before finally seeking disposal.
8. To reduce crime, disorder, drug use and the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour, particularly in our priority neighbourhoods and other hotspots.
9. To protect and improve the environmental quality of neighbourhoods, particularly those with high levels of multiple deprivation.
10. To protect and improve physical and mental health, improve access to good quality healthcare and encourage healthy lifestyles, particularly in the most deprived parts of the Borough.
11. To provide increased opportunities for engagement in cultural, leisure and recreational activities.
12. To ensure access for all to good quality, affordable housing that is sustainably designed, built and maintained.
13. To improve educational and vocational achievement, ensuring a culture of lifelong learning that allows people to fulfil their duties and potential in a global society.
14. To effectively involve local communities in decision making, build community capacity and encourage a sense of community identity and welfare that embraces diversity and equality of opportunity.
15. To ensure the borough has a secure supply of energy that meets current and future needs and minimises our contribution to climate change.
16. 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. To aim for a more sustainable local economy that is built on knowledge-based, socially responsible and environmentally progressive industry and commerce.
18. To ensure a thriving and prosperous borough of high employment and economic activity that benefits everyone.

# Who has been involved?

We made sure that we involved as many people as possible in the sustainability appraisal processes; including many council officers, partner agencies (such as the local NHS Trusts), and community members. Not only did this help us to share our initial ideas with key stakeholders, but it meant we were able to benefit from a wider range of expertise and experience in identifying sustainability impacts and making suggestions to improve the Core Strategy as it developed.

Our methods of involvement included organising a series of meetings and impact workshops, email and telephone correspondence and wider consultation with the general public through our website.

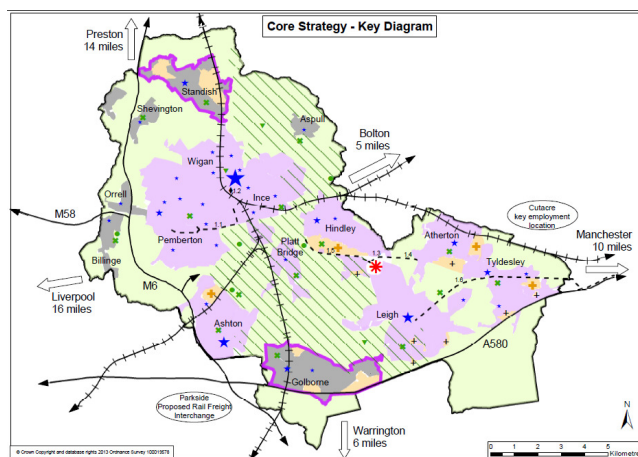
Throughout the Core Strategy the Sustainability Appraisal has formed an important part of the consultation process

## Key findings - Spatial Policies

### Our Spatial Strategy for Wigan

The Core Strategy has to identify the overall spatial approach to planning in the borough—where we will encourage development.

Our overall spatial approach is to focus development in the ‘east-west core’ of the borough where there is a need to regenerate deprived communities. Following consultation this was extended to include Standish, Golborne and Lowton and the whole of Astley.



#### Key impacts

- |  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| • Increased job opportunities, particularly for communities in greatest need.                      | ✓ | • Cost of delivering infrastructure improvements may affect viability   | ✗ |
| • Most of the boroughs sensitive landscapes would be retained.                                     | ✓ | • Some negative impacts on landscape & water, but these can be mitigated.   | ✗ |
| • Cleaner, greener, safer and more attractive environments   | ✓ | • Increased congestion and air quality problems in the long term if adequate infrastructure is not secured alongside development. | ✗ |
| • Stronger communities and better access to community activities and facilities in deprived areas. | ✓ |   |   |
| • Long term positive impacts on health and wellbeing in areas of greatest need.                    | ✓ |   |   |

We arrived at this spatial option following consultation and consideration of the development needs of the borough—including addressing a shortfall in housing land identified by the Inspector. Our sustainability appraisal revealed that, whilst there are benefits from alternative options, this approach is a sustainable one although issues would remain in some areas of the borough.

# Other Spatial Policies

There are 4 other spatial policies that support the overall spatial approach outlined above. These policies set out where we want to see significant development. For example, the broad locations for development are mainly located in the east west core, and contribute a large proportion of the overall forecasted development over the plan period.

A number of appraisals were carried out to inform the spatial policies, including detailed site appraisals. These appraisals can be found in more detail in the full Sustainability Appraisal Report and its accompanying documents.

The site appraisals we carried out helped us to determine which broad locations were the most desirable across the spectrum of sustainability issues. We ruled out several broad locations on this basis.

## SP2 Our town and local centres

Our Town Centres will be enhanced as thriving, attractive and locally distinctive places which can support a broad range of activities. Within these centres we will support proposals to improve their prosperity.



- Tackles derelict and vacant buildings. ✓
- Helps to create safer, more attractive town centres ✓
- Promotes accessible services for communities and business. ✓
- Opportunities for sustainable waste management and energy generation. ?
- Promotes accessible central health facilities. ✓

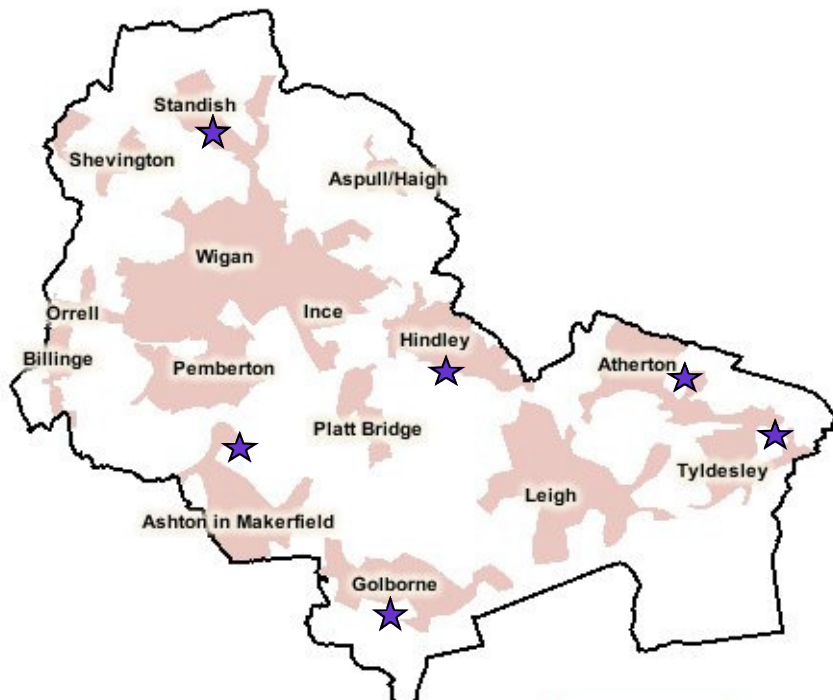
## SP3 A strategic site—Northleigh Park

Land between Leigh Road, Hindley Green, Westleigh Lane and Nel Pan Lane, Leigh known as “Northleigh Park” will be brought forward for a comprehensive high quality development of housing, employment and green infrastructure.

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|--|---|
| • Tackles dereliction / contamination and makes improvements to neighbourhood quality. ✓ | • Congestion and air quality could worsen in the long term without supporting infrastructure. ✗ |
| • Improvements to open space provision. ✓  | • Potential to develop a district energy scheme as part of the development. ?                   |
| • Provision of employment and housing. ✓✓  | This could have positive impacts.   |

## SP4 Broad locations for new development

Sites for substantial new development will be allocated in subsequent development plan documents which will also be subject to sustainability appraisal. However, they will be in the broad locations here.



### Broad Locations

1. South of Hindley
2. East of Atherton
3. Garrett Hall, Astley
4. East of Wigan Road, Landgate
5. Golborne and Lowton
6. Standish

- |   |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
| • Large scale delivery of housing with knock on positive impacts. | ✓ | • Cumulative impacts upon landscape, biodiversity, soil and water resources. are inevitable, but mitigation measures have been implemented to reduce this. | ✗ |
| • Provision of higher quality employment sites.                   | ✓ | • This scale of development will increase energy consumption. Measures to incorporate low carbon energy schemes should therefore be considered.            | ✗ |
| • Improved open space and environmental quality.                  | ✓ |  |   |

## SP5 Greenheart

An area from north to south through the core of the borough, it's 'Greenheart', will be developed as a high quality countryside park that helps to boost the borough's image, supports regeneration and encourages healthier lifestyles.



- |   |    |
|---|----|
| • Improved wildlife habitats, open space landscape and protection of resources. | ✓✓ |
| • Improved health and wellbeing.  | ✓  |
| • Potential conflict between different elements of green infrastructure.        | ?  |
| • More attractive markets for housing and business growth.                      | ✓  |



## New Spatial Policy

The Planning Inspector has recommended the inclusion of a new spatial policy that reflects the National Planning Policy Framework’s presumption in favour of sustainable development. The impact of this policy in sustainability terms is essentially neutral as it adds little to the approach as laid out in the National Planning Policy Framework.

## Alternative Spatial Option

We examined a number of different options throughout the Sustainability Appraisal process. These included two alternatives to the final overall spatial policy (SP1) - “East West Core plus Standish” and “East West Core plus Golborne and Lowton”. Below is a brief analysis of these alternatives.

Both options will see negative impacts in the short term ranging from minor to major. Issues such as biodiversity, the greenfield nature of sites, landscape character, pressures on education provision, tackling inequality and addressing congestion will all be negatively impacted in the short term.

However, in general these impacts are less pronounced in the EWC plus Golborne option. Tackling inequality would be more difficult in the EWC plus Standish option.

In the medium term built environment; community safety; neighbourhood quality; health; recreation; housing; education and community development all see moderate positive impacts from development specifically in EWC plus Golborne and to a lesser degree in EWC Standish.

In the long term there is likely to be a range of positive impacts with recreation benefiting specifically from links to Greenheart and the opening up of previously inaccessible locations, in health and education with the support for new facilities and in transport provision and air quality. Some negatives will remain.



## Sites

Details can be found in the complete Sustainability Report at [www.wigan.gov.uk](http://www.wigan.gov.uk)

SITE NOT TAKEN FORWARD	EXAMPLE REASONS NOT TAKEN FORWARD
East of Hooten Gardens, Leigh	Soil and minerals, greenbelt, greenfield, transport.
North East of Bedford, Leigh	Biodiversity, air quality, congestion, landscape character
North of Beech Hill, Wigan	Landscapes, infrastructure issues, health and recreation
North West of New Springs, Wigan	Landscapes, greenfield, congestion, air quality
NW of Standish Lower Ground, Wigan	Landscapes, biodiversity, recreation, congestion
Sandyforth Farm, Wigan	Accessibility, landscapes, inequality issues
South East of Hawkley, Wigan	Greenfield, congestion, biodiversity, landscapes
South of Winstanley	Greenfield, inequality, energy, biodiversity, air quality
The Bell, Lamberhead Green, Wigan	Landscapes, soils/minerals, infrastructure constraints

# Key findings - Core Policies

## CP1 Health and CP2 Recreation

Improving health and wellbeing, reducing health inequalities and protecting and enhancing open spaces and sporting and recreation facilities.

- Enhanced opportunities for and access to recreation, leisure and cultural activities. ✓
- Improved health and wellbeing for our communities with knock on benefits for the economy. ✓
- Knock on benefits to other areas such ✓
- New facilities may affect landscape quality or built environment. ✗

## CP3 Community Facilities

Extending and enhancing opportunities for people to participate in community activities

- Positive impacts on community development with knock on benefits for other social objectives. ✓
- Small chance that new facilities could be inaccessible to some social groups ✗

## CP 4 Education and Learning

Helping to improve levels of knowledge, skills and qualifications in the borough and reduce inequalities in education and learning

- Improved facilities and accessibility to facilities for young people and adults. Knock on positive impacts on health, community cohesion, leisure and economy. ✓
- Potential for inequalities to be widened in terms of access to learning facilities. Impacts are small. ✗

## CP 5 Economy and Employment

Help create sustainable economic growth; boost our economic performance and profile; and provide a wider range of job opportunities

- Supports economic growth that can be shared by all, particularly those in need ✓
- Raises aspirations and has knock on benefits on a range of social objectives ✓
- Economic growth could lead to an increase in the use of resources, having a negative impact on objectives for water, energy, waste, landscape and biodiversity. Mitigation measures will be necessary. ✗

## CP6 Housing

Ensure that there is sufficient housing in the borough to meet people's needs and support a good quality of life.

- Presents opportunities to enhance areas with poor environmental quality ✓
- Increased congestion and air quality problems if infrastructure not secured. ✗
- Increased use of resources and pressure on environmental assets. ✗
- Supports economic growth in the borough, with knock on positive impacts on health, education and other social objectives. ✓✓

## CP7 Accessibility

Improve accessibility and connect opportunities

- Potential benefits to environment as a result of sustainable transport measures ✓
- Supports economic growth and makes it easier for local companies to do business. ✓
- Promotion of more active, healthy lifestyles and access to jobs ✓
- Potential cumulative impacts on environment due to road schemes ✗

## CP 8 Green Belt and Safeguarded Land

Extent of the Green Belt maintained. Safeguarded land reviewed.

- Maintenance of open space and countryside is very positive for recreation. ✓
- Helps to preserve soil, landscape quality, biodiversity and water quality. ✓
- Helps to preserve local character and cultural identity. ✓
- National policies make it more difficult to implement waste and energy facilities. ✗

## CP9 Strategic Landscape and Green Infrastructure

Improve the natural environment and open spaces within and between our towns and other settlements for the benefit of people and wildlife

- Very positive impacts on wildlife, water, landscape quality and soil. ✓
- Helps to improve resilience to the impacts of climate change ✓
- Creates attractive environments for local communities and businesses. ✓
- Potential conflicts between different elements of green infrastructure. ✗

## CPI0 Design

Improve the design of the built environment

- Helps to create more attractive, vibrant and pedestrian friendly places. ✓
- Supports higher quality design, helping to make our buildings more attractive. ✓
- Knock on positive impacts on health and wellbeing. ✓
- Better waste storage and design for ease of access and maintenance. ✓
- Short term cost implications may have a negative impact on development. ✗
- Supports sustainable design and construction. But impacts are uncertain. ✓

## CPI1 Historic Environment

Conserve and enhance the historic environment thereby helping to make the borough a better place to live, visit and work in.

- Positive impact on the built environment; protecting historic features and encouraging reuse of existing buildings. ✓
- Energy schemes can be more difficult to implement in historic buildings and places. ✗
- Creates more attractive places with a unique selling point (with knock on benefits for housing and economy). ✓

## CP 12 Wildlife habitats and species

Help enable wildlife habitats and species to prosper

- Positive impacts on wildlife, water, landscapes & other environmental objectives. ✓
- Improved opportunities for recreation, with knock on benefits to wellbeing. ✓
- Potential barrier to development, particularly energy schemes. ✗
- Better quality environments could attract housing and employment. ✓

## CPI3 - Removed by the Inspector

## CPI4 Low Carbon Development

Reducing the impact of energy generation and reducing carbon emissions

- |   |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
| • Minor positive with potential for more resource efficient buildings                         | ✓ | • Helps to tackle climate change.                                    | ✓ |
| • Slight potential to increase initial costs of implementing higher sustainability standards. | ✗ | • Minor positive impacts on the economy in the longer term.          | ✓ |
|   |   | • Short term impacts on housing development due to increased costs.. | ✗ |

## CP 15 Waste

Ensure greater efficiency in the use of resources

- |   |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
| • Knock on benefits on social factors such as community development and health.   | ✓ | • Potential Impacts on landscape and amenity. Mitigation is possible though. | ✗ |
| • Potential for negative impacts on biodiversity depending upon waste facilities. | ✗ | • More efficient use of resources. Positive impact on soil and minerals.     | ✓ |

## CPI6 Minerals

Meet our future need for minerals whilst minimising the adverse impacts

- |   |   |  |    |
|---|---|--|----|
| • Positive for the continued growth of the economy.   | ✓ | • Coal extraction and burning would increase carbon emissions. | ✗  |
| • Mining activities would produce waste, affect landscape, disturb wildlife and cause temporary pollution issues. | ✗ | • Protection of natural resources and minerals.                | ✓✓ |

## CPI7 Flooding

Reduce the risk of flooding from all sources

- |  |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
| • Positive impact on environmental objectives, particularly water and biodiversity | ✓ | • Minor negative impacts on the delivery of housing in the short term. | ✗ |
| • More resilient communities and economy in the long term.                         | ✓ |  |   |

## CPI8 Environmental Protection

Maintain, enhance and protect our environment for the benefit of people and wildlife

- |  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| • Improvements in environmental quality                          | ✓ | • Knock-on benefits for health and well-being.                        | ✓ |
| • Long term positive impacts on landscape                        | ✓ | • Stronger amenity considerations could affect energy / waste schemes | ✗ |
| • Creates more attractive communities and business environments. | ✓ |   |   |

## CPI9 Developer Contributions

Ensure that development contributes to off-site works and programmes

- |   |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
| • Could help to fund low carbon energy networks and other vital infrastructure.   | ✓ | • Positive for securing community facilities which aids capacity building.                                     | ✓ |
| • Potential for funding to be spread thinly over many areas, or certain issues could be disregarded in favour of others | ✗ | • Potential for contributions to act as a barrier to development and a lack of clarity in terms of priorities. | ✗ |

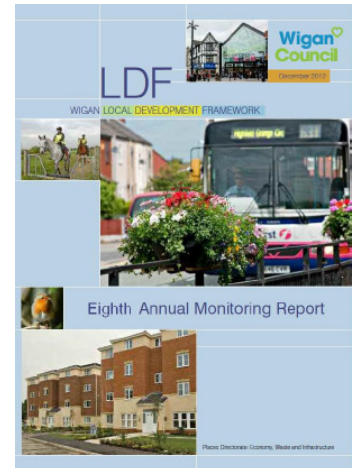
# Monitoring

In order to measure how successful our Core Strategy is in practice, we will collect regular data covering a range of topic areas. For example, we will keep track of any impacts on wildlife habitat as a result of development.

To avoid duplication of effort we are making the best use of monitoring frameworks that already exist such as the council's annual monitoring report. As the Sustainability Appraisal was an integral part of the Core Strategy, there are many crossovers in evidence and monitoring data.

The council's annual monitoring reports monitor the effects of the Core Strategy as it is implemented. In particular it considers:

- Whether policies have been met or progress is being made towards meeting them
- Where policies are not being met or progress is not being made, the reasons why
- What significant effects implementation of the policies is having on the sustainability objectives and whether these effects are intended
- Whether the policies need adjusting or replacing because they are not working as intended, and
- What remedial actions we need to take to achieve the outcomes we want .



As such if any significant adverse effects are occurring during implementation of the Core Strategy, there is a mechanism in place to identify them and act upon them in order to reverse, reduce or mitigate those effects.

## Conclusion of the appraisal

The appraisal illustrates that our Core Strategy is generally very positive in terms of sustainability. There will be particular benefits for our most deprived communities, with the potential for increased opportunities in life, raised aspirations and improved quality of life.

Although there may be some negative impacts on environmental objectives such as, wildlife, landscape character, soil resources and water, these are not major concerns, and our Core Policies should help to mitigate any negative impacts that arise. Further detail may be necessary to determine the exact extent of some impacts. However, it may be the case that the development process can deal with this.

### Further Information

You can view the fully completed sustainability appraisal report on our website at [www.wigan.gov.uk/ldfcorestrategy](http://www.wigan.gov.uk/ldfcorestrategy)

You can also view the Core Strategy and supporting documents such as our topic papers and evidence studies.

If you would like to comment on our sustainability appraisal please contact us:

**Email:** [planningpolicy@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@wigan.gov.uk)

**or in writing to:** Planning Policy, Places Directorate, Wigan Council, PO Box 100, Wigan, WN1 3DS

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**Council**