

Auchterarder Expansion Development Framework: SEA Scoping Report

Perth and Kinross Council

March 2007

Issue/revision	Issue 1	Revision 1	Revision 2	Revision 3
Remarks	Draft for Discussion	Draft for Approval	Final	
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Project number	12151200/001	12151200/001	12151200/001	
File reference				

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1 Introduction

1.1 BACKGROUND

The requirement for housing and associated infrastructure development in Auchterarder is set out within the statutory Development Plan, that is the Perth & Kinross Structure Plan 2003 and the Strathearn Area Local Plan 2001. The Local Plan identifies land to the north of the town (at sites known as Kirkton and Castlemains) and land to the south of the town (Townhead site) for residential, employment and associated development to provide a land use framework in order to promote the necessary confidence to allow investment in infrastructure by both the public and private sectors. Following the local plan inquiry in 1999, the Reporter recommended the development of approximately 800 housing units in Auchterarder across three key development sites at Kirkton, Castlemains and Townhead.

In response to this requirement, Perth & Kinross Council (PKC) has proposed the *Auchterarder Expansion – Townhead and North East Development Framework* (referred to in this report as the Development Framework) which will form a part of the Development Plan and will guide development of the housing and other land uses proposed. In conjunction with PKC a consortium of housing developers (Muir Homes, King Homes and Richmond Homes) is preparing a masterplan for the development proposals. A draft of the masterplan was prepared in December 2005 and has been included on the Council's website for public comment (see Section 1.5 on consultation). Although the masterplan and the Development Framework are essentially synonymous, PKC has adopted the term 'Development Framework' as the statutory title for the plan.

This report has been prepared by WSP Environmental Ltd under commission and direction from PKC as the Responsible Authority for the Development Framework. WSP Environmental has been appointed to undertake the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) by Gillespies LLP who have prepared the draft masterplan for the proposals, for the consortium of housebuilders comprising Muir Homes, King Homes and Richmond Homes.

1.2 REQUIREMENT FOR SEA


In accordance with The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes (Scotland) Regulations 2004, a Screening Report was prepared by PKC in November 2006 setting out the Council's view, as Responsible Authority, that the Development Framework is likely to have significant environmental effects. The report was issued to the three SEA Consultation Authorities each of whom responded during December 2006 indicating they were in agreement with PKC's view.

The Council has subsequently prepared a determination (under Article 13 of the Regulations) and publicly advertised this determination that SEA is required for the Development Framework. The SEA will be undertaken in accordance with The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes (Scotland) Regulations 2004 (hereafter referred to as the 'SEA Regulations') since the first formal preparatory act on the Development Framework was prior to February 2006 (after which date the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 applies).

1.3 GUIDANCE

This Scoping Report has been prepared with reference to the following SEA guidance:

- European Commission DG Environment (2004) Implementation of Directive 2001/42 on the Assessment of the Effects of Certain Plans and Programmes on the Environment;
- Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2005) A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive;
- Scottish Executive (2003) Environmental Assessment of Development Plans, Interim Planning Advice;
- Scottish Executive Circular 2004/2 (2004) Strategic Environmental Assessment for Development Planning; the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes (Scotland) Regulations 2004;
- Scottish Executive (2006) Strategic Environmental Assessment Toolkit, Version 1.



The most relevant guidance, and that which has been followed most closely in preparation of this report is the Scottish Executive SEA Toolkit.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

The purpose of this SEA Scoping Report is to set out sufficient information on the Development Framework to enable the Consultation Authorities to form a view on the scope and level of detail that will be appropriate for the SEA Environmental Report.

This Scoping Report presents preliminary information on the baseline environmental conditions for the proposed development areas, and on key environmental problems and opportunities in that study area. Through analysis of the baseline information, and the relevant strategies and policies pertaining to the development area, a context has been established for the SEA, including a set of proposed SEA objectives which will form the basis for the environmental assessment of the Development Framework. A preliminary environmental appraisal of the Development Framework has been undertaken to identify the potential for significant environmental effects and from this we have indicated topics for the SEA which are proposed to be scoped in or out of the detailed environmental assessment which will be reported in an Environmental Report.

1.5 PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

Consultation activities in relation to proposals for housing development at a strategic level in Auchterarder and nearby areas can be traced back to the consultation exercises undertaken by PKC on preparation of the Strathearn Area Local Plan. Key activities in this process included:


- Newsletters outlining key planning issues;
- Press releases and presentations;
- Public notices and advertisements; and
- Several public meetings where settlement proposals were presented as part of the draft Local Plan.

Consultation with key stakeholders on development proposals in Auchterarder yielded comments and inputs on how the development should relate to the existing settlement, on design guidance for new houses and on the need for affordable housing. In the light of the public and stakeholder consultation, the Local Plan (including the development proposals in Auchterarder) was amended and a Public Local Inquiry (PLI) held. At the PLI, it was determined that a masterplan should be developed for the housing proposals in consultation with the relevant parties, including the local community and that the previously proposed development on the northern side of Auchterarder (at Kirkton and Castlemains) should be augmented with the addition of a housing site at Townhead on the south west side of the town.

The finalised Local Plan was adopted in 2001 and accordingly made provision for mixed use housing developments in Auchterarder. In 2001 work on the required masterplan for the proposals was started and the evolution of the development proposals was concluded, with a draft masterplan prepared by the end of 2005.

Extensive public and stakeholder consultation was undertaken in the development of the masterplan for the expansion sites at Auchterarder, and following the preparation of the draft masterplan. The key activities were:

- Stakeholder consultation throughout the preparation of the masterplan with a range of planning, community and environmental organisations (including SEPA and Historic Scotland);
- Establishment of a Masterplan Steering Group comprising representatives of a number of community organisations;
- A public exhibition, held in Auchterarder (for a two week period in April 2006) to present the masterplan concept to the public and to obtain information and public response to the proposals, which are being fed back into the finalisation of the draft masterplan;
- The final report of the draft masterplan (dated December 2005) was subsequently uploaded onto PKC's website and has been available for informal public comment since this time.



A schedule of all comments received during the April 2006 exhibition on the masterplan was subsequently prepared and made public by PKC, incorporating the views of the Consortium and the Council's planning, transport, education and recreation officers on each issue. Issues raised by this process, and additional comments made by the Council on the masterplan, are currently being discussed and agreed with the Consortium and its advisors.

Since there has been extensive consultation at all stages of the development of the masterplan, it is not PKC's intention to have a further round of public exhibitions in parallel with the SEA. Instead a period of public consultation on the Development Framework and the Environmental Report is proposed prior to adoption of the plan by PKC. Further details of the next stages for the plan are presented in Section 5 of this report.

1.6 STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT

This Scoping Report has been structured as follows:

- Section 2 presents an overview of the Development Framework setting out key facts about the plan.
- Section 3 sets out the context for the Development Framework including a review of the strategic context of the plan, an outline of the environmental baseline and analysis of relevant problems and opportunities in the Auchterarder area.
- Section 4 of the report addresses the environmental assessment, reviewing alternatives to the Development Framework, setting out the findings of the scoping appraisal and presenting the proposed appraisal framework for the detailed environmental assessment which will be reported in the Environmental Report.
- Section 5 presents commentary on the next steps for the SEA.

The report is supported with the following appendices:

- Appendix A: Lists of Strategies, Plans and Programmes Reviewed.
- Appendix B: Analysis of Other Strategies, Plans and Programmes.
- Appendix C: Objectives and Sub-Objectives.
- Appendix D: Environmental Baseline.



2 The Development Framework

2.1 KEY FACTS

The key facts for the Development Framework are presented here, based upon the draft Auchterarder masterplan which has been prepared by Gillespies LLP and which has been made publicly available by PKC via its website.

Name of Responsible Perth and Kinross Council

Authority

Title of Strategy Auchterarder Expansion – Townhead and North East Development Framework

Requirement for the Strategy The finalised Strathearn Area Local Plan was adopted in 2001 following a Public Local Inquiry, and made provision for a mixed use housing development on the northern edge of Auchterarder. It is a condition of this provision that the Council, in conjunction with landowners, developers, the local community, statutory and non-statutory bodies, would ensure the provision of a masterplan for the development.

Strategy Subject The Development Framework is for a mixed use land use development which is predominantly based on the provision of up to 800 new homes across three sites in Auchterarder, Perth and Kinross.

Period Covered by the Strategy The Development Framework is intended to be implemented in three key phases over a period of 10 to 15 years, with the majority of the new housing expected to be complete by 2020.

Frequency of Updates The Development Framework set out the aspirations for the detailed planning applications which will be submitted to PKC for each housing area and other land uses. It is not anticipated that the masterplan will be updated, unless PKC determines at any point in the future that new planning or design guidance warrants an amendment to the masterplan.

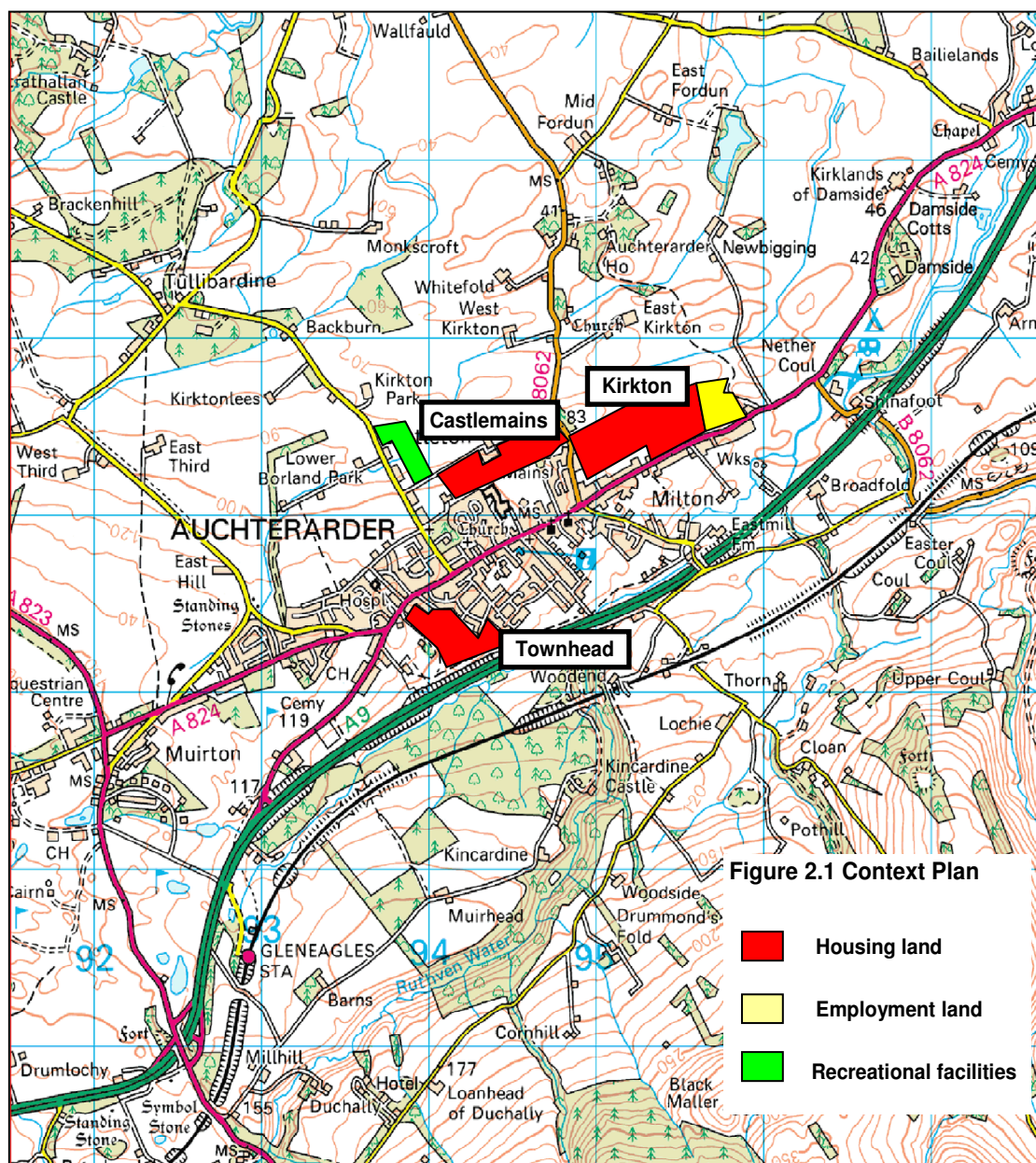
Strategy Area The Development Framework applies to the Castlemains, Kirkton and Townhead sites in the town of Auchterarder in Perth and Kinross.

Plan Purpose and Objectives The purpose of the Development Framework is to set out the proposals for new housing development on three key sites in Auchterarder. These are:

- Kirkton, on the north east edge of the town;
- Castlemains, on the northern edge of the town and immediately west of the Kirkton site; and
- Townhead, in the south western area of Auchterarder.

Figure 2.1 indicates the location of the proposed development areas and their geographical context within Auchterarder. The masterplan sets out the planning, landscape and infrastructure context for the developments including guidelines on house design, layouts and associated landscaping.

Figure 2.1 Context Plan



Contact Points

Queries on the Development Framework should be addressed to:

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Queries on the SEA of the Development Framework should be addressed to:

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3 Context of the Plan

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This section of the Scoping Report provides the context for the SEA. This has been undertaken through a review of other relevant strategies, plans and programmes to identify relevant issues, baseline information and objectives which are linked in some way with the Development Framework and/or with the environmental appraisal of it. This section also presents an overview of the relevant environmental baseline conditions, highlighting in particular issues and problems therein.

It is PKC's view that the focus of the SEA should be at a relatively 'local' level since the strategic context for the housing proposals has been dealt with through the progression and adoption of the statutory Development Plan (which comprises the Perth & Kinross Structure Plan and the Strathearn Area Local Plan). The Development Plan was subject to a sustainability appraisal and the key strategic policy arguments and issues were considered at the inquiry into the Strathearn Area Local Plan. The approach to review and analysis of the context for the Development Framework has therefore been to concentrate on the key documents which provide information and objectives at the regional, sub-regional and local level in order to focus the SEA onto the key issues for the town of Auchterarder and its relevant sub-regional connections.

3.2 RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER PLANS, PROGRAMMES AND ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES

An understanding of the relevance of other legislation, policy and plans to the Development Framework is an essential step in understanding its context, the relationship with other strategies and in deriving the necessary environmental baseline for the assessment.

A range of strategies, plans and programmes have been reviewed to provide a context for the SEA, and from which to identify potentially applicable objectives for the environmental assessment. Since the focus of this SEA is at a localised level (see Section 3.1), the review of plans and programmes has been focused on relevant strategy and policy at the Scottish national, the regional and the local levels. This is considered to be appropriate not just because of the localised focus of the SEA, but also because all relevant international and European environmental legislation has been implemented into national strategy and guidance, and regional planning strategy reflects the range of environmental and sustainability issues which are prevalent at the national and international level. In addition, experience from previous SEA suggests that a point is reached in reviewing strategies where all of the key issues and objectives are identified with very marginal (or no) benefit to be gained from exhaustive reviews of all possible strategies and plans.

For these reasons we have adopted a targeted approach to plan and policy review. The strategies and plans which have been assessed are listed in Appendix A and the information obtained from the reviews is set out in Appendix B.

Since the focus of the environmental assessment is concentrated on development at a localised level, the review of policies and plans has included the statutory Development Plan. The strategy and objectives within these plans have been considered, and relevant aspects of some of the broader and environment specific policies were also adopted within the long list of possible objectives for the SEA which are presented in Appendix C. In this way we have ensured that regional and local policy has been taken into account in the objectives, and hence the appraisal framework for the SEA.

Planning policy guidance has been considered in relation to relevant Scottish Planning Policies (SPPs) and National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPGs), however Planning Advice Notes (PANs) have not been included in the review as these are considered to be detailed statements on planning issues (and for the planning system) which are more relevant to detailed design and planning applications than to the level of appraisal undertaken for an SEA.

A summary of the key information identified from this review process, including the relationship between the Development Framework and the most relevant plans reviewed is presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Review of Plans and Programmes and Linkages with the Development Framework

Name of Plan	Main Requirements of Plan	How it affects or is affected by the Development Framework
Changing our Ways – Scotland's Climate Change Programme, 2006	Encourage more efficient use of energy by the public and Scottish businesses while increasing "greener" renewable sources of electricity.	Incorporation of energy efficiency and microgeneration measures into the principles of the Development Framework to maximise sustainability of the development.
SPP 3: Planning for Housing, 2003	National level policy and priorities on the role of the planning system in the delivery of housing, including standards and approach in relation to the provision of new housing development.	Focus on the importance of design quality and safety by design, minimising the environmental impacts of housing development and the integration of transport and land use planning. Key policies and principles to be incorporated into the Development Framework and ultimately into the scheme design.
NPPG11: Sport, Physical Recreation and Open Space, 1996	Protection and provision of open space and recreational facilities while safeguarding the quality of the natural and cultural heritage.	Consideration of open space impacts and adequate provision within the Development Framework.
NPPG 5: Archaeology and Planning	National policy framework for the protection of archaeology from development proposals.	Framework has the potential to directly and indirectly affect known and unknown areas of archaeological sites and importance.
SPP 11: Physical Activity and Open Space Consultation Draft	Draft framework for policy on recreation and open space including for the edges of urban areas.	The Framework should take the opportunity to enhance the provision and quality of open space and green areas in the new housing developments.
Perth & Kinross Structure Plan	Part of the statutory development plan. Sets out the long term land use planning vision for development and the environment.	Provides a strategic context for the Framework, including the basis for housing allocations. Includes key objectives for communities, resource use and the environment which are relevant to the SEA.
Strathearn Area Local Plan, 2001	Part of the statutory development plan. Sets out the local development and planning context for development in Auchterarder.	Various objectives which seek to control the environmental effects of new development, including biodiversity, landscape, waste minimisation, energy efficiency, water and flooding, and sites and features of cultural heritage importance. Development framework must address these areas to ensure that any development which comes forward as a result is sustainable, policy compliant and appropriate to the local context of Auchterarder.
Perth & Kinross Joint Environmental Strategy and Action Plan 2004 to 2008	Prepared by the Perth & Kinross Community Planning Environment Partnership. The Plan sets out an interim vision and strategic framework for the environment.	The priorities for action relating to biodiversity, waste, energy and sustainable construction. Particular to the natural heritage, the plan seeks to ensure that new and existing urban development enhances opportunities for landscape and wildlife value. The Development Framework provides the opportunity to pursue the objectives of the strategy, and provide an exemplar of how sustainable urban development can be undertaken in a way which protects and enhances the local environment.



Name of Plan	Main Requirements of Plan	How it affects or is affected by the Development Framework
Perth & Kinross 2007/10 Corporate Plan	Opportunity for joint working with other organisations to deliver new homes.	Promotes role of Perth & Kinross Council as the responsible authority for the SEA.

From the review of the plans and programmes, and in particular those listed in the table above, a series of objectives were identified which have been taken forward for further consideration in deriving a complete set of objectives for the SEA. Relevant objectives identified from the plans and programmes analysed have been listed in the review proforma tables in Appendix B. The objectives identified were then allocated according to their relevant SEA topic (see Section 3.3 for SEA topics) and augmented with other potential SEA objectives which have been identified from relevant guidance documents and those which have been drafted by the SEA team from a number of sources. The resulting long list of objectives and sub-objectives is presented in Appendix C of this Scoping Report.

The process of refining and identifying objectives, developing sub-objectives, and their role in the appraisal framework for the SEA is discussed further in Section 4.4 of this Scoping Report.

3.3 ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINE

3.3.1 Overall Approach

This section identifies the structure of the environmental baseline for the SEA of the Development Framework and summarises the key environmental issues and problems which have been identified from the review of plans and programmes and the analysis of the baseline environmental conditions. It provides a summary of the environmental baseline data gathered for the Auchterarder area relevant to the SEA topics identified in Table 3.2. Further details of the environmental baseline are presented within Appendix D.

The collation and analysis of the environmental baseline has been undertaken to a level of detail appropriate to the SEA of the Development Framework. Information has been collated for a study area which has been identified to include the town of Auchterarder, adjacent areas of the A9 trunk road where junction improvements are proposed and to include a sufficient 'buffer' area (of approximately 5km – see Figure 2.1) around the town to take account of baseline conditions in locations which may be indirectly affected by the proposed housing expansion areas.

Baseline data have been identified and collated to a relatively detailed level for an SEA which takes account of PKC's 'localised' focus for the environmental assessment and the fact that the masterplan sets out information on the proposed development areas, their anticipated phasing and on the potential design and landscaping arrangements.

The size of the study area, and the extent of the baseline data gathered, therefore reflects the scope and level of detail anticipated for the environmental assessment.

3.3.2 Environmental Baseline Topics and Scope

The relationship between the environmental topics for the SEA and the criteria required by the SEA Regulations is shown in Table 3.2, together with an indication of the key environmental issues for the Development Framework which have been identified for each topic.

Table 3.2 SEA Topics, Criteria and Issues

SEA Environmental Topics	Criteria from Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations	Key Environmental Issues
Air Quality and Noise	Air, Climatic Factors, Human Health, Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Air quality (concentrations of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and particulate matter (PM₁₀)) particularly from road traffic sources ■ Noise climate and noise sources (including traffic) ■ Construction noise
Soils and Geology	Soil, Material Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Designated sites ■ Soil types, resources and quality ■ Historical sources of land contamination
Aquatic Environment	Water, Climatic Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Physical form, hydrological and hydrogeological regime ■ Freshwater quality ■ Flooding and flood risk
Climate Change	Climatic Factors, Material Assets, Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions ■ Climate change response/'proofing' ■ Local climate ■ Eco homes concept
Landscape, Townscape & Visual Effects	Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Designated landscapes ■ Landscape/townscape character, quality and sensitivity ■ Visual receptors and views ■ Design quality and layout
Biodiversity	Biodiversity, Fauna, Flora	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Designated areas ■ Protected (and other recognised) habitats and species
Cultural Heritage	Cultural Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Designated sites ■ Archaeological sites and monuments ■ Historic landuse/landscapes
Population and Human Health *	Population, Human Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Accessibility to open space, recreation and community facilities ■ Community safety and security ■ Effects of local environmental problems and nuisances
Material Assets	Material Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Open space and recreational facilities ■ Waste minimisation and management ■ Drainage and wastewater capacity
(Cumulative Effects)	Interaction between these factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cumulative effects of the Framework will be considered in the assessment, drawing on the relevant environmental baseline data from the above topics.

* In accordance with guidance in the SEA Toolkit, population and human health will be considered as a combined topic.

The scope of several of the criteria in Schedule 2 of the Regulations is potentially very wide. We have attempted to define the issues to be covered under these criteria (and thus for each relevant topic) in a way which is meaningful for this SEA and for the Auchterarder Development Framework. We have also been conscious of the Scottish Executive's guidance on SEA, and previous correspondence with the Consultation Authorities, which stresses that SEAs should focus on environmental issues only – it is not the role of SEA to consider economic and socio-economic issues in detail. Hence the scope of topics for human health and population and material assets in particular have been deliberately focussed (as shown in Table 3.2) on environmental issues which are of relevance to the SEA being undertaken.

3.3.3 Current and Future Environmental Baseline

A detailed review of the environmental baseline for the Auchterarder area which has been gathered to date has been presented in Appendix D of this report. It is intended that this baseline data set will be used – with any relevant additions suggested during consultation on the Scoping Report – for the environmental assessment of the Development Framework.

A summary of the baseline environmental information, and key issues identified, has been presented in Table 3.3 for reference. Relatively few statutorily or locally designated sites have been identified from the baseline review. The information in Table 3.3 also considers how the environmental baseline of the area may change in the forthcoming years during which phased development of housing at Auchterarder is proposed (in the absence of the Development Framework).

Table 3.3 Baseline Environment Summary

SEA Topic	Summary of Baseline	Future Baseline Projection
Air Quality and Noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No recent air quality monitoring data are available Noise survey for the masterplan indicates higher ambient levels at Townhead in proximity to the A9 Traffic flow data for 2004 indicate flows along the main street (A824) of 5,825 vehicles per day 	Roadside air pollutants will be influenced by changes in traffic flows and improved efficiencies of future vehicles
Soils and Geology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prime quality agricultural land is located along northern edge of Auchterarder (Kirkton & Castlemains) Potentially contaminative former land use adjacent to the Townhead site associated with a former tip 	Land uses are not predicted to change significantly in the absence of the Development Framework
Aquatic Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Ruthven Water runs to the south of Auchterarder and is classified by SEPA as Grade B (Fair) and A2 (good) water quality at different stretches of the watercourse The development areas are not located in flood risk areas 	Water quality may improve slightly in future years as programmes for compliance with the Water Framework Directive are implemented
Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No emissions data are available at the regional level. Key emissions of carbon dioxide are predicted to be from traffic and combustion of fossil fuels for heating of homes and businesses in Auchterarder 	Climate change predictions suggest warmer and wetter winters and drier summers
Landscape, Townscape & Visual Effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No designated landscape areas within or around Auchterarder The town is located on the edge of the Broad Valley Lowland and Lowland Hills landscape character areas 	The landscape and visual baseline is not predicted to change significantly in the absence of the Framework
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are four Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) within 2km of Auchterarder 	The ecological baseline is not predicted to change significantly in the absence of



SEA Topic	Summary of Baseline	Future Baseline Projection
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LBAP habitats surrounding the town include farmland, urban and built environment and woodland 	the Framework
Cultural Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Auchterarder Castle, located on the northern edge of the Castlemains site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument There are a number of listed buildings along the spine of the main street through Auchterarder One NMRS site is located within the Kirkton site boundary (Auchterarder Tipperquheywell) 	The cultural heritage baseline is not predicted to change significantly in the absence of the Framework
Population and Human Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Auchterarder had a recorded population of 3,945 (in 1,752 households) in the 2001 census There is no specific evidence of environmental problems affecting community health 	The population of Auchterarder and its health is not predicted to change significantly in the absence of the Framework
Material Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing assets include a new community school with associated playing fields and a sports centre 	No significant changes predicted

The baseline data set is still under development and will be completed prior to commencement of the detailed environmental assessment. The full baseline will be presented in the proposed Environmental Report.

3.4 ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS

Environmental issues and problems in the study area for the proposed Development Framework have been identified from the process of environmental baseline data gathering, collation and analysis. Where relevant, information and observations from stakeholders involved in the masterplan and SEA process on environmental problems have also been recorded.

The key issues and problems which have been identified to date are summarised in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 Environmental Problems and Issues

Topic	Problem or Issue	Relevance to Development Framework and/or SEA
Air Quality and Noise	No significant problems have been identified from the baseline collated. Proximity to the A9 as a source of traffic noise at the Townhead site.	Need for detailed design considerations in relation to ensuring that any new build housing on the Townhead site is not subject to unacceptable noise levels due to its proximity to the A9.
Soils and Geology	Potentially contaminative historical land uses have been identified adjacent to the Townhead and Kirkton sites.	Site investigations have been undertaken and development will need to accord with mitigation proposals.
Aquatic Environment	No specific environmental problems have been identified in relation to the aquatic environment.	SEA to consider construction effects and hydrological change from development areas on watercourses and flooding.
Climate Change	No specific existing environmental problems relating to climate change have been identified.	Carbon emissions from traffic generated by the development will need to be assessed.
Landscape, Townscape & Visual Effects	Located on a ridge, Auchterarder is very prominent in views from the surrounding area. Existing houses in the town will have changes in views from the new housing development.	Detailed consideration of views from the wider landscape. Potential issues for the current properties in Auchterarder whose outward views will be changed.
Biodiversity	No specific environmental problems have been identified in relation to biodiversity.	Assessment to consider effects of proposals on loss of key habitats.
Cultural Heritage	No specific environmental problems in relation to cultural heritage have been identified.	There is the opportunity for development to improve access to and understanding of cultural heritage sites and features such as incorporation of the 'Auchterarder Tipperquheywell' into the design of the development.
Population and Human Health	No specific environmental problems affecting human health or population have been identified.	No specific issues.
Material Assets	No specific environmental problems relating to material assets have been identified.	No specific issues.

Any additional issues identified when the full environmental baseline for the SEA is completed will be added to the list and checked with reference to the objectives proposed for the SEA framework (see Section 4.4).



4 Environmental Assessment

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This section sets out the scope, approach and level of detail proposed for the detailed environmental assessment of the strategy. The alternatives which have been considered by PKC in identifying Auchterarder as a key housing expansion area are discussed in Section 4.2. An initial environmental assessment of the Development Framework, and an indication of the potential for significant environmental effects is presented in Section 4.3 within the context of the proposed scope for the SEA. The proposed set of objectives and criteria for the environmental assessment and the appraisal framework for the SEA is identified in Section 4.4, and Section 4.5 presents a short discussion on the proposed approach to the environmental assessment process.

4.2 PLAN ALTERNATIVES

The approach to the treatment of alternatives for housing development and housing supply in the Strathearn area has been one of evolution of proposals primarily during the drafting and approval of the local plan for the area (the Strathearn Area Local Plan 2001). Preparation of the Plan needed to take account of the requirements of the then Tayside Structure Plan (which has been replaced subsequent to adoption of the Local Plan, in 2003) in terms of housing requirements to the period for 2006 and in the longer term.

The draft Plan prepared in 1998 identified Auchterarder as a location suitable for provision of a significant proportion of the required housing land supply in the Strathearn area, and the initial proposals were then amended in the light of public and stakeholder consultation and the PLI (see Section 1.5). During these stages, alternatives were considered in relation to the scale, location and form of housing development in the town which resulted in the balance currently proposed in the subsequent masterplan. In particular, due to the lack of sufficient brownfield and infill sites in the town, a strategic area at the northern edge of Auchterarder, known as the Opportunity 3 site, was identified as the only realistically available option for meeting the longer term housing requirements. This process included consideration of environmental issues, in particular in relation to land take of agricultural land and the landscape setting of the boundaries of the northern edge of the development.

The Council determined that the appropriate mechanism for integrating the major housing expansion with the rest of the town, and to address more detailed planning and environmental issues, was the preparation of a masterplan. This reflects the strategic nature of the development proposals which, at the time of the Local Plan inquiry, were estimated to include for development of 1000 houses (now proposed for 800 houses) over a period well beyond the lives of the Local Plan and Structure Plan (ie to around 2020). A third housing site, at Townhead in the south western part of Auchterarder, was added to the scope of the masterplan following recommendations by the Reporter from the Local Plan Inquiry. A number of other amendments were made to the development proposals in response to the conclusions of the Reporter, most significantly in environmental terms being the re-drawing of the settlement boundary at the northern edge of the town to reflect the natural topographical setting.

The indicative allocations of housing in the proposed Development Framework therefore reflect the planning constraints, housing requirements and environmental issues associated with the options for development in Auchterarder. Table 4.1 provides a summary of the development proposals on each site within the Framework area.

Table 4.1 Housing Development Sites and Phasing

	Kirkton	Castlemains	Townhead
Gross area (hectares)	25.0	14.0	10.7
Area for employment (ha)	4.0		
Open space (ha)	4.6	2.6	1.7
Area for housing (ha)	20.4	11.4	9.0
Housing Densities (# units)	400	213	168
Note: Based on information presented in the Auchterarder Masterplan (2005). The land allocations exclude the areas proposed for formal recreational facilities north of the Castlemains site.			

As the Development Framework has now been largely completed taking account of strategic and locational alternatives during its development, the approach to assessment of alternatives for the SEA will focus on analysis of the different phasing options for each of the three identified development sites. However, revisions and refinements to the masterplan are ongoing and expected in response to issues identified during the environmental assessment process. The approach to environmental assessment is set out further in Section 4.4 below.

4.3 SCOPING OF LIKELY SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

An initial environmental appraisal of the potential effects of the Development Framework has been undertaken as part of the scoping stage of the SEA. This has been based on existing knowledge of the development proposals taken from information in the 2005 Auchterarder Masterplan and from information gathered to date on environmental baseline conditions and issues. The purpose of this initial assessment has been to identify whether any environmental topics can be scoped out from more detailed assessment where it can be clearly demonstrated that no significant environmental effects will be predicted (and that the Framework will not in any way influence the environment).

The findings of the initial appraisal, and the proposed scope of the more detailed environmental assessment for the SEA are presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Scoping of Likely Significant Environmental Effects

SEA Issues	Scoped In	Scoped Out	Justification
Air Quality and Noise	Yes		Increased housing will result in greater levels of car ownership and traffic in the town at certain times of day. These indirect effects may give rise to changes in local air quality and noise along affected routes.
Soils and Geology	Yes		Development will affect areas of prime quality agricultural land and will result in permanent changes to soils and drift geology. Potential contamination issues.
Aquatic Environment	Yes		Increased run-off from development areas may increase flood risk, albeit SUDS measures are proposed. Construction activities have the potential to pollute local watercourses without adequate silt control.
Climate Change	Yes		Indirect effects on carbon emissions from increases in traffic are possible. The proposals offer an opportunity to build homes with very low carbon emissions through energy efficiency, insulation and even micro-generation.
Landscape, Townscape & Visual Effects	Yes		Extensive new housing development on the fringes of Auchterarder has the potential for significant effects on landscape quality and character and on visual receptors



SEA Issues	Scoped In	Scoped Out	Justification
			and key views.
Biodiversity	Yes		Development of the housing sites on previously undeveloped land has the potential to affect habitats and species through loss of habitat, severance and disturbance.
Cultural Heritage	Yes		There are a number of archaeological sites close to the development areas which may be indirectly impacted. The housing proposals have the potential to affect previously unknown archaeological remains.
Population and Human Health	Yes		The masterplan incorporates open space and formal recreational provision which, if utilised, offers the potential for health benefits through increased participation in physical fitness and recreation.
Material Assets	Yes		Housing development offers an opportunity for sustainable construction methods and materials to minimise waste. The masterplan will also enhance local recreational and open space provision.

The commentary in Table 4.2 indicates that at this stage, PKC is not proposing to scope out any of the SEA environmental topics based on the initial environmental appraisal carried out to date. It is expected that, on further detailed assessment (and the application of appropriate and committed mitigation measures), there may not be significant residual effects for a number of the topics. However, in accordance with the precautionary approach to environmental impact assessment, PKC proposes to undertake further examination of these issues in the more detailed environmental assessment, and to identify in the Environmental Report those topics which are not predicted to have significant effects as well as those which are predicted to be significant.

4.4 FRAMEWORK FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The SEA will be undertaken using a set of objectives that cover each of the environmental topics scoped into the assessment. A framework for the environmental assessment has been developed during the scoping stage of the SEA. This framework sets out the proposed SEA topics, objectives and indicators which will be used to guide and structure the appraisal of the strategy and is presented in Table 4.3.

The appraisal objectives have been derived and presented at two levels. Firstly a high level or strategic objective which sets out the overall intention and direction for the environmental topic being considered, and secondly a set of sub-objectives which provide more specific appraisal intentions. The synthesis of these objectives and sub-objectives has drawn on:

- Objectives of relevance to the assessment identified in the review of relevant strategies, plans and programmes (see Appendices A to C for details of the strategies, plans and policies reviewed and the objectives identified);
- The initial analysis of the environmental baseline including trends, issues and areas of specific environmental problems; and
- A review of appropriate “generic” objectives from relevant guidance documents on SEA.

The objectives were selected and drafted through a workshop process involving the WSP SEA team, PKC, Gillespies and the development consortium. The process of objective setting has been guided by the need to maintain the relevance of the objectives to the specific scope and influence of the Development Framework.

A series of draft appraisal indicators have also been identified in the framework which will be used to focus the appraisal and wherever possible provide a basis for quantitative analysis of the environmental issues. It is important to note that these indicators have been specifically drafted for the prediction and evaluation of environmental effects of



Table 4.3 Draft SEA Framework

Topic	Objective	Sub Objective	Criteria	Comment/Target
Air Quality and Noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To minimise the effects which changes in noise and air quality may have on the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To minimise the effects of the development on air quality To limit noise and air quality related nuisance from traffic using new and existing roads in the town To provide enhanced routes for journeys on foot and by cycle To encourage and facilitate the provision of better public transport services To remove traffic adjacent to recreational areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nuisance from construction activities and traffic Traffic flows on key routes Levels of roadside noise and local air pollutant concentrations (in particular NO₂ and PM₁₀) New footways and cycleways Public transport services Speed reducing measures on new and existing roads 	<p>Information on traffic flows can be used as a proxy method for predicting changes in noise and air quality.</p> <p>Provision of well linked walking and cycling facilities between the housing areas and local facilities should assist in encouraging non-motorised journeys to these facilities.</p> <p>Speed reducing measures can help to reduce traffic related noise.</p>
Soils and Geology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that the development does not impact adversely on soils and geology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To prevent contamination of land To minimise the loss of prime quality agricultural soils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area of prime agricultural land affected Area of brownfield or derelict land re-used Best practice construction environmental management 	<p>The Development Framework will require occupation of areas of land currently under agricultural use. New development should avoid introducing any new pollutants or pathways to soils during construction.</p>
Aquatic Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To safeguard the quality of waterbodies, prevent an increase in the risk of flooding and use water responsibly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To prevent the pollution of watercourses (surface and ground) during construction and operation of the development To prevent an increase in run-off from the housing area To design homes to minimise the use of fresh water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of surface watercourses Installation of SUDS measures Use of permeable paving Water metering, water recycling and low water appliances in new houses 	<p>Watercourses in the catchment area of the development may be affected by changes in the quantity and quality of run-off from the sites.</p> <p>SUDS measures can be employed to attenuate flows and to naturally break down pollutants.</p> <p>Measures to conserve and recycle water should be designed into new homes.</p>



Topic	Objective	Sub Objective	Criteria	Comment/Target
Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To minimise direct and indirect emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the development and to protect new homes from the effects of climate change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To minimise energy used in materials selection and construction To make new homes as energy efficient as reasonably practicable To encourage non-car travel wherever possible To design and build homes which recognise the potential effects of climate change and can adapt to them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specification of low embodied energy in building materials Targeting 'Excellent' standard in BREEAM assessment for homes Incorporation of energy efficiency and micro-generation systems in new homes and buildings Walking and cycling routes to local services which are more direct than trips by car Housing design which will withstand greater and more severe weather effects Sourcing materials locally to help reduce the overall carbon footprint of the development 	<p>The Building Regulations set out the minimum requirements for energy use and insulation. Achieving an 'excellent' BREEAM rating would involve use of lowest energy demand systems and high standards of energy efficiency and insulation.</p> <p>Measures to promote walking, including good path networks will help to reduce the number of car trips for local journeys</p>
Landscape, Townscape & Visual Effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To conserve landscape features, to strengthen and enhance landscape character and to minimise visual intrusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To minimise impacts on the landscape setting of Auchterarder To protect and integrate with landscape and townscape features, character and quality To minimise impacts on key views and visual intrusion To promote a high quality of housing layout and design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Landscape character area(s) affected Landscape and townscape features affected Key views affected Housing designs reflecting vernacular architecture, materials and settlement layouts 	<p>Auchterarder occupies a prominent position on a ridge surrounded by high quality landscapes in the Strathearn area.</p> <p>Maintenance of an attractive town fringe, with sensitive design and appropriate landscape planting will be necessary to minimise the impact on landscape setting and on views to, from and within the town.</p>
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To protect biodiversity and ensure no net loss in key habitats and species 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To minimise habitat loss from new housing development To protect adjacent habitats and species during construction works To enhance local biodiversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area of key habitats lost (particularly LBAP habitats) Effects on known LBAP species populations Measures to protect habitats 	<p>Field boundaries, hedgerows and agricultural land support habitats and species and there will be localised effects from housing construction. Minimising disturbance during housing development must be ensured.</p>



Topic	Objective	Sub Objective	Criteria	Comment/Target
		through appropriate planting and habitat creation	adjacent to housing areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposals for habitat creation (including SUDS ponds) 	Opportunities to create new, and enhance existing habitats will be taken through landscaping proposals.
Cultural Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To protect the built heritage, the archaeological resource and the historic setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To prevent development from having a detrimental direct or indirect effect on designated features To minimise the direct effects of development on archaeological sites To minimise indirect effects on the settings of sites, buildings, designed landscapes and historic landscapes To enhance access to, and interpretation of, cultural heritage features in the town 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Known archaeological sites affected Effects on settings of cultural heritage sites and features Effects on historic landscapes and their settings Provision of walking routes to historic or cultural sites and interpretative materials 	<p>Auchterarder has a long history of human settlement and development of housing on greenfield sites may have some effects on previously unknown archaeology.</p> <p>Through good design and landscaping, effects on the setting of cultural heritage features can be reduced or avoided.</p> <p>There is an opportunity to improve public access to a number of cultural heritage sites in and around the town.</p>
Population and Human Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To create a healthy and safe living environment for Auchterarder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To maintain and improve opportunities to access open space and recreational facilities To create conditions to encourage walking and cycling for short journeys To enhance community safety through design and layout To minimise adverse effects from existing or future sources of pollution To avoid the use of materials hazardous to health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of population within 500m of recreational facilities Length of new walkways and cycleways linking housing to local facilities Development layouts to promote safety and prioritise people over cars Specific environmental problems or nuisances from existing sources and those which could be created as a result of implementation Vehicle numbers in Auchterarder town 	<p>The linkage with health has been addressed through opportunities to encourage walking and cycling through good layout and routes to town facilities.</p> <p>Housing layouts can also help to promote a sense of community and limit the potential for road traffic accidents, particularly for children.</p> <p>Existing environmental issues with the potential to affect health include noise from the A9</p>
Material Assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop and operate the assets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To create and manage new recreational facilities and open space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New or enhanced recreation facilities and open space 	Material assets have been defined in terms of the contribution of the



Topic	Objective	Sub Objective	Criteria	Comment/Target
	associated with the framework in a resource efficient manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ To maximise the use of recycled materials in construction■ To manage waste responsibly during construction■ To design for recycling in house design and development layouts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Sustainability of materials used in housing■ Waste minimisation and recycling plan for construction■ Designing for recycling	framework to recreational facilities (links with human health) and in the efficiency of resource use in specification of materials and handling of waste during construction and operation.

4.5 APPROACH TO ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

4.5.1 Overall Approach

Due to the proposals for staged development of the masterplan over three time phases (due to span a significant period of time up to 2020 when development is anticipated to be complete), it is proposed that the environmental assessment considers the environmental effects separately at each of the three stages.

In addition, we have considered the most appropriate approach to assessment in spatial terms for the masterplan. Since the development sites at Castlemains and Kirkton are adjacent to one another it is proposed that the combined effects are considered for these developments as a 'group'. Since the Townhead site is located some distance from Castlemains and Kirkton, and on the opposite side of the town, it is proposed that the effects of this site are considered separately during each phase of development. For each phase, it is also proposed that the combined (or cumulative) effects of the two 'groups' of sites are then considered. The table below summarises the assessments which are proposed in the detailed work.

Table 4.4 Assessment Scenarios

Time Phase	Castlemains & Kirkton	Townhead	Cumulative Sites
Phase 1	✓	✓	✓
Phase 2	✓	✓	✓
Phase 3	✓	✓	✓

4.5.2 Application of the SEA Framework

The appraisal of each site/group of sites during each temporal stage will be reported in the form of an appraisal framework. These will follow the general format set out in the template presented in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Appraisal Framework Template

Site(s) :		(eg Castlemains & Kirkton or Townhead)			
Phase and assumed assessment year:		Phase 1, Phase 2 or Phase 3 (2010; 2015; 2020)			
Assumed changes in baseline:		Significant changes based on current trends or potential developments			
Topic	Objectives and Sub-Objectives	Criteria	Assessment of Effects	Mitigation	Residual Effect Significance
Air Quality & Noise	High level objective ■ Sub objective ■ Sub objective ■ Etc...	■ Criteria ■ Criteria ■ Etc	Including short term/permanent; direct and indirect	Mitigation measures assumed in place for the assessment	Significance of predicted effect(s) post mitigation (Major; moderate; not significant)
Etc...					
Summary of Significant Effects					
Short summary of findings from the assessment in the framework					

A more concise version of the appraisal framework will be developed to report the assessment of the cumulative effects of the Development Framework. In addition to the predicted effects of the combination of the three masterplan sites, the assessment of cumulative effects will also take account of any other significant development proposals or concepts within, and in proximity to Auchterarder, which may influence the environmental effects when considered with the housing proposals.



4.5.3 Prediction and Evaluation of Effects

Environmental impacts will be predicted for each topic using the SEA framework to guide the scope of the assessment. In particular, the potential impacts of the Development Framework will be predicted in relation to the detailed criteria which have been proposed for each topic. These criteria reflect the level of detail anticipated as being appropriate for the assessment by PKC based on the 'localised' approach to the SEA previously discussed in Section 3.1. Given the long lead time for the housing developments and the phased nature of the proposals, the assessment will consider the potential for significant impacts during the construction stages of the work in addition to the longer term permanent and operational effects of the development.

Environmental effects will be evaluated taking into account available information on the development proposals, mitigation measures assumed and the nature and sensitivity of the affected aspects of the predicted baseline conditions. The significance of predicted effects will be reported following mitigation (where this is known), that is the significance of the residual environmental effects.

The use of the detailed appraisal indicators presented in Table 4.3 will also depend upon the extent to which it is possible to quantify the effects of the Development Framework. Some elements of the Development Framework will require to be assessed in a qualitative way, drawing on professional judgement. In addition, the assessment of indirect elements such as traffic related noise and air quality will draw upon existing information prepared in support of the masterplan and detailed quantitative appraisal of these effects is not considered to be within the scope of the SEA. Instead, and where data support it, assessment of such effects will be undertaken based upon proxy information such as traffic flow data and using appropriate professional judgement to estimate the significance of effects. However, wherever possible, the SEA team will seek to quantify the predicted effects of the Development Framework and these will be reported in the Environmental Report.



5 Next Steps

5.1 PROPOSED CONSULTATION TIMESCALES AND METHODS

Publication of the Environmental Report for public consultation is currently programmed for early Summer 2007, and this will be followed by a proposed 6 week period for consultation on the Environmental Report. Following public consultation, the comments received from the SEA Consultation Authorities and other representations from the public will be taken into account in the final drafting of the Development Framework, which PKC anticipate to be adopted by late Summer 2007 together with a post adoption SEA Statement.

5.2 ANTICIPATED MILESTONES

The key milestones in the development of the SEA are as follows:

- Submission of SEA Scoping Report to the SEA Gateway – mid March 2007
- Consultation Authorities scoping response to this document – late April 2007
- Preparation of the Environmental Report– April to May 2007
- Publication of the Environmental Report – late May 2007
- Consultation on Environmental Report and Development Framework – June 2007
- Amendments to the Development Framework (and Environmental Report if required) – June/July 2007
- Adoption of the Development Framework and publication of the post adoption SEA Statement – late Summer 2007