1.0 Skelmersdale and South-Eastern Wards

Wards: Ashurst, Birch Green, Digmoor, Moorside, Skelmersdale North, Skelmersdale South, Tanhouse (Skelmersdale) and; Up Holland and Bickerstaffe

1.0.1 Introduction

This ‘spatial evidence paper’ provides an overview at a local level – in this case, Skelmersdale, Up Holland and Bickerstaffe – summarising much of the evidence available to date on a variety of topics. Borough-wide data on individual topics can be found in the relevant ‘thematic spatial evidence papers’.

Skelmersdale is located towards the south-east of the Borough, and is the largest settlement in West Lancashire, and has sat at the top of the ‘settlement hierarchy’ in previous local and regional plans. Formerly a mining village, Skelmersdale was designated a new town in 1961 and was designed to house overspill population from Merseyside following clearances of urban terraced areas post World War 2.

The village of Up Holland lies on undulating land immediately to the east of Skelmersdale, close to the border with the Wigan boundary. Bickerstaffe is located to the south of the Borough and is a more sparsely populated and rural area. The ‘Skelmersdale and South-Eastern Wards’ area is shown below.

Chart 1.1 Location of ‘Skelmersdale and South-Eastern area’ and its wards
1.1.0 Current baseline

1.1.1 Demographics

Skelmersdale forms the largest and most populated settlement within West Lancashire; it also contains the wards with the highest population density in the Borough.

Table 1.1 Population and number of households of Skelmersdale and South-Eastern wards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>% of West Lancs. population</th>
<th>Area / hectares</th>
<th>Density (no. of persons per hectare)</th>
<th>Number of households</th>
<th>% of West Lancs. households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashurst</td>
<td>6,310</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>23.4</td>
<td>2,472</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birch Green</td>
<td>4,350</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>1,721</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digmoor</td>
<td>4,467</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>41.5</td>
<td>1,839</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moorside</td>
<td>3,909</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>1,063</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skelmersdale North</td>
<td>4,061</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>1,688</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skelmersdale South</td>
<td>6,458</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>2,834</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanhouse</td>
<td>4,980</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>2,015</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skelmersdale Total</td>
<td>34,535</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>1497</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14,172</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up Holland</td>
<td>6,175</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>977</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2,597</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bickerstaffe</td>
<td>1,988</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>3725</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>8,37</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Lancashire</td>
<td>110,685</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>34679</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>45,381</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2011 Census, ONS
31% of the Borough’s population live in Skelmersdale; 38.6% live in the ‘Skelmersdale and South-Eastern’ area (including Up Holland and Bickerstaffe). Skelmersdale has a younger, more varied population structure than other areas of the Borough.
Health

Life expectancy within West Lancashire is lowest in the Skelmersdale wards of Digmoor, Birch Green and Tanhouse. Men in the most deprived areas have life expectancies almost 10 years shorter than those in the least deprived areas: for males, life expectancy ranges from 83 years in Derby ward to 73.6 years in Tanhouse – a difference of 9.4 years.\(^1\)

In this spatial area, the percentages of obese adults and infant deaths are close to the England average, but the percentages of smoking in pregnancy and road injuries and death are significantly worse. The proportion of physically active children is also significantly worse than the England average. Deaths from circulatory disease are higher in the deprived areas around Skelmersdale, and are significantly above the North West standard mortality rate average. Many causes of circulatory disease stem from poor lifestyle choices.\(^2\)

Residents from the Skelmersdale wards of Skelmersdale North, Skelmersdale South, Moorside and Birch Green rate their health less well than residents of Rufford, Derby and Parbold. This is consistent with the health inequalities previously identified. The average for the proportion of people reporting themselves in bad health across the Borough is 6%. Rufford and Derby (4%) fall below the average, whilst Birch Green and Skelmersdale South rise above the average (9%).

80% of Bickerstaffe residents report their health as good health and 5% in bad health.

Chart 1.4 West Lancashire residents’ description of health

Source: 2011 Census, ONS

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\(^1\) The seven wards: a focus on Skelmersdale, S Collins, Lancashire County Council, March 2015
**Education and skills**

26% of West Lancashire’s workforce has a degree or equivalent, or higher level qualifications (‘Level 4’). This compares to a regional figure of 24% and a national figure of 27%, placing the Borough roughly on par with its counterparts. The highest proportion of people with Level 4 qualifications (degree level) or above are found at Aughton, Parbold, Newburgh and Wrightington – these are dormitory settlements used predominately by commuters to other areas.

23% of West Lancashire’s workforce have no qualifications; 39% of those with no qualifications are resident in Skelmersdale. Skelmersdale has the highest proportion of people with no qualifications, higher than the Borough, regional and national figures.

30% of people resident in Bickerstaffe have a Level 4 qualification; this is amongst the highest level in the Borough. 23% of the ward’s residents do not have any qualifications.

**Chart 1.5 Educational Achievement by broad spatial area**

![Educational Achievement Chart](chart.png)

*Source: 2011 Census, ONS*

**Guide to the levels:**

- **Level 1:** Includes 1-4 O-Levels/GCSEs, NVQ level 1, Foundation GNVQ
- **Level 2:** Includes 5+ O-levels/GCSEs, 1 A-Level, Intermediate/Higher Diploma, NVQ Level 2, Intermediate GNVQ
- **Level 3:** Includes 2+ A-Levels, Advanced Diploma, NVQ Level 3, Advanced GNVQ, ONC, ONS, BTEC National
- **Level 4:** Degree, Higher Degree, NVQ Level 4-5, HNC, HND, BTEC Higher, Higher diploma, Foundation degree
Skelmersdale has a significant proportion of its residents employed in the town, particularly in manual work in manufacturing/industrial sectors, suggesting that the skills base in the town is low. Skelmersdale has limited knowledge-based employment available.

Chart 1.7 Approximated social grade

Approximated social grade DE – Semi-skilled & unskilled manual occupations, unemployed and lowest grade occupations

Source: 2011 Census, ONS
Deprivation

Overall, in the 2015 Indices of Multiple Deprivation, West Lancashire was ranked 164th out of 326 local authorities in England. This places it right in the middle nationally. However, varying levels of deprivation can be found within the Borough.

Skelmersdale is the most deprived area in West Lancashire with 14 of its 23 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) (60%) featuring in the top 20% most deprived LSOAs nationally. The wards of Birch Green, Digmoor, Moorside and Tanhouse all have LSOAs featuring in the top 1-20%.

Nationally, about one in five local authorities (22%) contain at least one neighbourhood which is in the one per-cent most deprived nationally. West Lancashire can be included in this 22% as it has one LSOA (Digmoor) which is within the 1% most deprived nationally.

Conversely, the Borough also has some of the lowest levels of deprivation found across England. 21 of the Borough’s 73 LSOAs (29%) fall within the 20% least deprived neighbourhoods nationally. There is therefore a polarisation within the Borough between those areas in the highest and lowest two deciles (20%) of deprivation.

Table 1.2 Deprivation shown by Borough and Skelmersdale level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cumulative LSOA’s</th>
<th>Remaining LSOAs</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Lancashire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of SOAs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of SOAs</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skelmersdale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of SOAs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of SOAS</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 2015, CLG

Skelmersdale scores badly in all of the individual deprivation domains except for environment, where it performs better than other areas of West Lancashire.

Chart 1.8 illustrates each of the LSOAs within West Lancashire, with the most deprived LSOAs in the darkest colour and the least deprived LSOAs in the lightest colour. It can clearly be seen that Skelmersdale contains some of the most deprived areas in the Borough, with other pockets of deprivation in the rural areas to the north and south-west as well as the urban wards of Scott and Burscough East.
Looking at each of the individual deprivation domains:

**Income**

The income deprivation domain measures the proportion of people in an area who are living on low incomes, including both those that are out of work and those that are in work but who have low earnings. This is done by looking at people who are on means-tested benefits such as Income Support and Working Families Tax Credit.

Income deprivation is at its worst in Skelmersdale where jobs are less skilled, wages lower and a greater proportion of residents claim benefits and job seekers allowance. After Skelmersdale, the levels of deprivation are high in North Meols, predominately an agricultural/horticultural business area, and in Ormskirk and Burscough.

**Employment**

The employment deprivation domain measures the involuntary exclusion of the working age population to employment by looking at people who claim benefits. It includes those people who would like to work but are unable to do so due to unemployment, sickness or disability, or caring responsibilities.

Families experiencing employment deprivation are very likely to also experience income deprivation, and so patterns between employment and income deprivation often broadly mirror each other.

In 2015, employment deprivation levels are highest in Skelmersdale. Other statistical sources (NOMIS) show that unemployment patterns and JSA claimants are higher in Skelmersdale than the rest of the Borough.
Health
The health deprivation domain looks at the population for high rates of premature death, or whose quality of life is impaired by poor physical or mental health.

Health deprivation levels are worst in Skelmersdale. This is followed by pockets in the urban areas in Ormskirk and Burscough and in the rural areas, particularly in the north and south. Health deprivation appears to have worsened across the Borough since 2010. Skelmersdale remains the most deprived area in 2015, however generally health deprivation has worsened across the whole of the Borough since 2010.

Education
The education deprivation domain measures the lack of attainment and skills in the local population and has two sub-domains it uses to capture deprivation. The first looks at education deprivation for children and young people in the area, and the second looks at lack of skills and qualifications among working-age adults.

Education deprivation levels are worst in Skelmersdale. This is followed by pockets in the urban areas in Ormskirk and Burscough and in the rural areas in the north within Tarleton, Hesketh Bank, North Meols and Aughton and Downholland.

Living environment
The living environment domain looks at deprivation in the local environment in two ways: the inside environment, which looks at the quality of housing, and the outside environment which looks at the two measures of air quality and road traffic accidents.

In contrast to many of the other domains, Skelmersdale LSOAs perform better than many of their rural counterparts for living environment deprivation. Whereas Bickerstaffe, given its rural nature, performs relatively badly.

Crime
The crime deprivation domain measures the risk of personal and material victimisation at a local level, using Police Force data including indicators on burglary, theft, criminal damage and violence.

In 2015, Birch Green and Digmoor in Skelmersdale have the worst crime deprivation ranking, followed by Aughton and Downholland. Areas of Newburgh, Parbold and Wrightington have some of the least deprived areas.

Housing & Services
The housing and services deprivation domain looks at barriers that local people have in obtaining suitable housing, and in accessing local services in terms of distance. It measures the physical and financial accessibility, using two sub-domains: ‘geographical barriers’ which relate to the physical proximity of local services, and ‘wider barriers’ which includes issues relating to access to housing such as affordability and homelessness.

Compared to other domains, Skelmersdale performs reasonably well in this domain due to the services that are accessible from the area, although the standard of housing is generally poor. Some of the worst performing areas are in the rural areas of the Borough, where housing availability and affordability is poor and services are more difficult to access due to the isolated nature of the rural areas. Again, due to its rural nature, Bickerstaffe performs relatively poorly in this indicator.
1.1.2 Housing

Household numbers

Table 1.3 Number of households

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>West Lancs</th>
<th>Skelmersdale and South-Eastern Wards</th>
<th>Ormskirk/Aughton</th>
<th>Burscough and Rufford</th>
<th>N Wards (N/Meols, Tarleton, Hesketh Bank)</th>
<th>W Wards (Halsall, Scarisbrick)</th>
<th>E P Wards (Parbold, Newburgh, Wrightington)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of households in West Lancashire</td>
<td>45,381</td>
<td>17,606</td>
<td>10,787</td>
<td>4,551</td>
<td>5,828</td>
<td>2,513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of housing in West Lancashire</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2011 Census, ONS (Figures may not sum due to rounding)

Skelmersdale and the South-Eastern wards contain 38.8% of the Borough's housing stock. Between the 2001 Census and 2011 Census, a total of 1,800 net additional dwellings have been built in West Lancashire. A total of 1,266 new dwellings have been built since 2011 (WLBC AMR 2016) and the majority of these have been in the main settlement areas of Ormskirk/Aughton (559 units) and Skelmersdale and South-Eastern wards (264 units).

Housing Tenure

Chart 1.9 Housing Tenure in West Lancashire

Source: 2011 Census, ONS
There is considerable variation between different parts of the Borough and areas are characterised by the type of tenure that predominates. In Skelmersdale, just under half of all homes are rented, mainly from the Council. Birch Green has 41% of its housing stock rented from the Council. The highest proportions of privately owned housing are in Aughton, Ormskirk and the rural wards – including Bickerstaffe.

The highest proportions of privately rented housing are found in Derby (largely due to the resident university student population), Bickerstaffe and the Skelmersdale wards of Moorside, Digmoor and Skelmersdale South.

Across the Borough, less than 1% of the housing stock comprises shared ownership properties and most of these properties are located in the affluent urban areas to assist with affordability. By contrast, Skelmersdale has very low numbers of shared ownership properties which is likely reflective of the relatively low house-prices already within the area.

Across the Borough, semi-detached homes are most common with a rate higher than the national average and slightly above that of the North West. The highest proportion of terraced houses are concentrated in the high-density urban areas of Skelmersdale and Up Holland.

Distribution of housing stock by Council tax band

Chart 1.10 Housing stock by Council tax band in West Lancashire

Council Tax banding information is a useful way of highlighting areas of the Borough where particular bands of housing are concentrated, thus implying a less mixed and balanced community. Similarly it also shows those areas of the area where there is a more mixed range of council tax bands. Of the 48,350 dwellings registered as stock in West Lancashire in 2015, 30% are classed within Band A and the highest proportion of these are found in Skelmersdale – 92% of the Birch Green area comprises Band A housing, followed by Moorside (91%) and Digmoor (81%). Skelmersdale has less stock within the higher bands.
Evidentially, there is a disproportionate choice of housing available in Skelmersdale compared with other areas of the Borough and more could be done to balance this deficit and provide a better balance of stock. In contrast to Skelmersdale wards, Bickerstaffe has a far smaller proportion of its properties within Band A, with 38% of its properties in Band C and a fairly even distribution between bands D to F.

**Housing affordability**

The average house price in 2012 in West Lancashire stood at £180,985. This is higher than the county and regional average prices but lower than that of England (which will be skewed by London prices). The average house price in West Lancashire in 2012 has increased by 92% on the 2001 average house price, although prices have fluctuated over recent years, following the banking crisis, credit crunch and recession.

The most readily available data on house prices by ward level dates back to 2010. Prices vary dependent on the location and the house type. The highest house prices (shown by the darkest colours on Chart 1.11) are found in the rural areas of Rufford, Aughton, Newburgh and Parbold. The cheapest houses (lighter areas) are located in Skelmersdale.

**Chart 1.11 Housing affordability across West Lancashire**

Skelmersdale has the cheapest house prices, particularly for terraced housing, reflecting the poor quality of stock within the town. Notwithstanding the cheaper property prices, Skelmersdale’s limited job opportunities, particularly skilled, technical and managerial jobs, generally provide lower wages and make affording a home increasingly difficult for many.
1.1.3 Employment and Economy

Economic Activity

At the 2011 Census:

- 55,680 people in West Lancashire were economically active (68%)
  - 11,504 people were economically active and employed part time (14%)
  - 29,658 people were economically active and employed full time (36%)
  - 7,807 people were economically active and self-employed (9.6%)
  - 3,180 people were economically active and unemployed (4%)
  - 3,531 people were economically active and in full time study (4%)

- 25,921 people in West Lancashire were economically inactive (32%)
  - 13,888 people were economically inactive and retired (17%)
  - 4,688 people were economically active and in full time study (5.7%)
  - 3,515 people were economically active and sick or disabled (4%)
  - 2,673 people were economically active and looking after home or family (3%)

Economic activity varies across the Borough, but levels can be attributed to different reasons. For example, economic activity is shown in Chart 1.13 as low (dark colour) in Ormskirk due to the high proportion of students registered in the town as economically inactive: full time students. Economic activity is also low in those areas that have a high proportion of the local population registered as economically inactive: retired. Whilst economic activity in Skelmersdale can largely be attributed to unemployment levels and sick and disabled persons.

Rates of unemployment vary across the Borough, being highest in Skelmersdale with an average rate of 10% unemployment, compared to 2% across the rest of the Borough. Unemployment peaks in Digmoor, Tanhouse (both 14%) and Birch Green (13%). Bickerstaffe has a low level of unemployment (3%).
The proportion of people in Skelmersdale who are economically inactive: retired is lower than anywhere else in the Borough and reflects the relatively young population of the town. Birch Green has the lowest proportion of retired persons across the Borough, representing 30% of those economically inactive in the ward, compared to 72% in Tarleton which has the highest proportion of retired persons.

Source: WLBC 2016 (2011 Census, ONS)
Occupational Structure

The occupational structure of residents of West Lancashire is provided in Table 1.4. This includes data on the occupations of those residents commuting outside of the Borough for job opportunities. Those accessing these jobs are not spread evenly across the Borough, significantly higher proportions of residents in the rural wards, Burscough, Ormskirk and Aughton areas were employed within higher level occupations. In contrast, more residents of Skelmersdale and Up Holland are employed in lower skilled occupations; more than double that of other areas. This is a cause and reflection of the levels of skills, employment and income deprivation concentrated in this area. Bickerstaffe and the South-Eastern Wards have the highest proportions of people employed in higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations at 14% and 16% respectively, higher than the Borough average of 9%.

Table 1.4 Occupational structure by areas of West Lancashire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West Lancashire</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skelmersdale &amp; Up Holland</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bickerstaffe</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skelmersdale &amp; SE Wards</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ormskirk with Aughton</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burscough with Rufford</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Wards</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Wards</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Wards</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: WLBC 2016 (2011 Census, ONS)*
Chart 1.16 Occupational structure by area

Industry groups

In 2011, the largest proportion of West Lancashire residents were employed in the wholesale and retail trade, education, human health and social work activities and manufacturing. Patterns for West Lancashire wards follow a broad similar pattern, although greater proportions of Skelmersdale residents are employed in the manufacturing, transport and storage industries than elsewhere in the Borough. Fewer proportions of people from Skelmersdale are employed within Education when compared to other areas.

Chart 1.17 Proportion of residents employed in each industry

Source: WLBC 2016 (2011 Census, ONS)
International Migrant Workers

West Lancashire has experienced the greatest increase in the number of migrant workers of all the local authorities, and exceeds the national and regional rates of growth. International migrant workers have begun to play a significant role in the development of West Lancashire’s economy, playing an important part of the agricultural workforce and an increasing European presence in Skelmersdale. Surveys reveal that migrant workers have had a positive effect on the North West’s economy, enabling businesses to meet demand and expand. Feedback also suggests that migrant workers offer companies a flexible pool of labour that often fill job opportunities unlikely to be occupied by British workers.

(Source: West Lancashire Economy Study, 2009)

1.1.4 Transport

Infrastructure

Skelmersdale, Up Holland and Bickerstaffe have excellent access to the M58 and M6 motorways and good connections by road to neighbouring towns of Southport, Preston, St Helens, Wigan and Liverpool, as well as in-lying areas of the Borough. Skelmersdale does, however, lack a rail station, with the nearest station located at Up Holland which supports limited rail services.

Bus transport on the main Wigan-Skelmersdale-Ormskirk-Southport corridor is relatively strong. However, bus services enabling access to the rural areas, such as Bickerstaffe, and in Skelmersdale (particularly for employment) are poor / non-existent. Bus service frequency reduces at evenings and weekends.

Vehicle ownership

In West Lancashire, 41% of households own 1 car / van, followed by 30% with two vehicles and 9% with three or more vehicles. Ownership of 4 or more vehicles is highest in Newburgh. 20% of the Borough’s households do not own a car or van. However, in Tanhouse, 46% of households own no vehicle (Source: 2011 Census, ONS).

Skelmersdale has the highest proportions of people owning no vehicle, meaning that access to employment and services is increasingly dependent on public transport, nearby facilities and sustainable design.
Journey to work by usual mode of travel

Chart 1.18 Methods of travel to work

Of those in employment, the most popular way of travelling to work is by car or van, and this is highest in Hesketh with Becconsall and Wrightington, which are rural areas affected by a lack of public transport services. Wrightington is adjacent to the M6 corridor and so likely encourages commuting by car. The lowest usage of cars is in Skelmersdale, although it should be borne in mind that fewer people in Skelmersdale actually own cars. Bike and foot methods are used the most by residents of Ormskirk, Skelmersdale and Burscough where a range of employment opportunities exist in those areas thereby reducing the need to commute long distances.

Source: 2011 Census, ONS
Distance travelled to work

The largest proportion of workers commuting less than 2 miles to work are located around the main employment hubs in the settlement areas of Skelmersdale, Ormskirk, Burscough and Tarleton. This is also in keeping with the evidence that Skelmersdale has the most people without access to a vehicle, and the most people commuting to work by bike, foot and bus. Commutes are therefore generally localised.

The commuting patterns in relation to distance travelled to work also often mirrors occupation types of West Lancashire. Elementary occupations are highest in Skelmersdale, which has the highest proportion of people travelling less than 2 miles to work. This illustrates that Skelmersdale has a high proportion of low skilled workers, low skilled employment opportunities and reflects the low proportion of residents that own a vehicle and instead travel to work using public transport, bike or foot.

Source: WLBC 2016 (2011 Census, ONS)
Bickerstaffe has the highest proportion of people working from home.

Clusters are found around the urban areas, with reduced pathways moving from the central to eastern parts of the Borough. Noticeably, a cycle path does not exist between Ormskirk and Burscough to connect the two areas. The new town layout of Skelmersdale has the highest cluster of cycle paths although they are often in a poor state of maintenance.

1.1.5 Land resources

Like most of the settlements in West Lancashire, Skelmersdale and Up Holland are surrounded by Green Belt. A large proportion of Green Belt land is designated as prime agricultural land. To the north east of Skelmersdale the land is predominantly grade 3 whilst the remainder of the surrounding area is grade 1 with some pockets of grade 2 land. A high proportion of Bickerstaffe ward is agricultural land and green belt.

Skelmersdale has a number of derelict and vacant brownfield sites. Regeneration of these sites would provide development opportunities and improve the local area.

1.1.6 Cultural heritage and landscape

Listed buildings and Conservation Areas

There are a few listed buildings within Skelmersdale, Up Holland and Bickerstaffe, including the Up Holland Benedictine Priory. There are no conservation areas in Skelmersdale, but Up Holland has a conservation area at Garnett Less, one around Parliament Street / Church Street / School Lane and one at Ormskirk Road.

Landscape

The Skelmersdale wards include Ashurst Beacon and the Beacon Country Park, which are key areas for recreation and one of the highest points in the Borough, providing views across the region to the Irish Sea and the Welsh Mountains.

1.1.7 Climate change, energy and flooding

The main settlements of Skelmersdale, Ormskirk and Burscough do not directly lie in areas of significant flood risk although properties located adjacent to the River Tawd in Skelmersdale and Sandy Brook in Ormskirk may be at some localised risk and may affect areas of development pressures in the towns.

1.1.8 Water Quality and Resources

Within West Lancashire there are several water systems including the River Tawd in Skelmersdale. The quality of these rivers should be protected and their benefits (e.g. recreation, biodiversity, water source) supported.

Within West Lancashire, there are a number of areas where sources of groundwater are protected through ‘Groundwater Source Protection Zones’ (GSPZs). These zones help to monitor the risk of contamination from any activities that might cause pollution in the area.
Inner zones and outer zones of the GSPZs are found in Ormskirk, Burscough, with the total catchment area extending to include the western part of Skelmersdale.

The Borough contains a mix of Principal, Secondary A and Secondary B Bedrock Deposits (Aquifers), including in and around Skelmersdale and Up Holland which need to be protected from contamination or damage.

1.1.9 Air Quality

The urban area of Up Holland, close to the intersection of the M6 and M58 motorways, is the only part of the authority that is classified in the worst air quality category in Lancashire.

CO$_2$ emissions in West Lancashire are high in comparison to most other Lancashire authorities, and the rate for tonnes per person is noticeably above the national level. Emissions from the industry and commerce sector are relatively high, and Skelmersdale’s industry sector contributes a significant part to this.

Source: Lancashire Profile 2016

1.1.10 Biodiversity

Up Holland contains one Site of Special Scientific Interest – Ravenhead Brickworks – important for its national geological significance. Pimbo Bush Quarry, Skelmersdale is designated as a Regionally Important Geological Site. There are a number of Biological Heritage Sites in and around Skelmersdale and Up Holland. Local Nature Conservation Sites can also be found in the area, including Beacon Park.

1.1.11 Local Services and Community Infrastructure

The main settlements of West Lancashire, including Ormskirk, Burscough, Skelmersdale, Up Holland, Parbold, Tarleton, Hesketh Bank and Banks, are all within areas that are within 1km of 5 basic services. These are urban areas, with populations of 1,000 people or over.

Skelmersdale has most of the main services, and is served by smaller shopping and service areas such as Sandy Lane and Digmoor Parade as well as local convenience stores.

Skelmersdale, the largest settlement in West Lancashire, does not have a rail station and so development in the town will have a negative impact on the proportion of dwellings accessible to rail services.

Open Space and Recreation facilities

The majority of residents in West Lancashire have access to either a park or amenity green space, including those residents in Skelmersdale and Up Holland. The area includes Beacon Country Park as well as smaller amenity spaces, recreation areas, sporting facilities and playing pitches. Shortfalls of playing pitches vary within different areas with many of the pitches concentrated in Skelmersdale and Up Holland (and Ormskirk).
The Open Space Study (2009) recommended that further park provision should be located in Skelmersdale and the quality of existing spaces should be improved.

Two of the Borough’s parks have been awarded Green Flag Status, including Beacon Country Park.

**Sustainable Settlement Study**

Skelmersdale is designated as a Regional Town and contains the highest proportion of the Borough’s population, a large number of services and facilities, a good stock of housing, employment opportunities, retail and leisure and is well-served by public transport. Skelmersdale has road and sewerage capacity to accommodate growth.

Skelmersdale does, however, fall some way behind its neighbouring areas in terms of deprivation levels, health and education and skills. Prioritising future development in Skelmersdale will not only mean that they are located in this sustainable settlement, but that investment and growth can directly benefit the town and improve the lives of its residents.
1.2.0 Future baseline

If current trends were to continue:

- Population will continue to increase, in line with Borough increase;
- There will be a significant increase in the proportion of the population who are aged;
- Life expectancy in Skelmersdale will continue to fall behind rates of less deprived areas;
- Deaths in the deprived areas will continue to be higher than expected under the standard mortality rate;
- Skelmersdale will continue to have a high proportion of people with no qualifications;
- The proportion of residents employed in non-skilled, manual work in the industrial and manufacturing sectors will remain high as a result of poor skills;
- Skelmersdale will continue to feature in the top 20% of most deprived areas in the country;
- Housing tenure and stock will continue to remain unevenly balanced with elsewhere in the Borough, with a higher proportion of Council rented homes, terraced homes and Band A (Council Tax) housing;
- Housing affordability will continue to be lower than in the remainder of the Borough, largely due to the poor quality of stock in the town;
- Most social rented housing will continue to be available in Skelmersdale;
- Housing need will continue for older persons households, single households and multi-adult households;
- Most new development will be focused in Skelmersdale;
- A high proportion of the occupational structure for West Lancashire will remain unskilled, elementary, manual labour;
- Industry will remain the dominant sector in the town;
- Retail will continue to be lost from the town to other areas and the night time and leisure economy is unlikely to significantly improve;
- Skelmersdale will continue to lose opportunities due to not having a rail link to Liverpool.

1.3.0 Key issues for Skelmersdale and South-Eastern Wards

- High levels of deprivation; some areas of Skelmersdale are amongst the worst 1% nationally.
- Physical and mental health is, on the whole, worse in Skelmersdale than in the other parts of West Lancashire. The average mortality rate is almost 10 years lower in the most deprived areas of Skelmersdale than in the least deprived areas such as Aughton.
- Relatively low educational attainment, qualification and skill levels.
- An unfairly distributed housing stock with a higher proportion of Band A and terraced housing and an uneven distribution in tenure types.
- Relatively high levels of unemployment, and people who are unable to work due to disability / illness / caring for people.
- General inequalities between Skelmersdale and other areas of the Borough.
- Limited choice of employment opportunities, focused mainly around unskilled or low skilled jobs in the manufacturing and warehousing industries.
- Lack of retail choice and no real night time economy.
- Limited transport services (few evening / night services), and no rail station.
- Mitigation of flood risk, including around the River Tawd.
- Air quality issues at the M58 / M6 junction.
1.4.0 Data Limitations

The more localised the data, the easier it is to pinpoint key issues for an area. Where available, localised data has been used. Some data may be unavailable at local (sub-Borough) level, i.e. towns or wards. Where localised data is unavailable, Borough-wide, regional or national trends have sometimes needed to be applied. Some data is still emerging through the Local Plan Review evidence base, as studies and reports are still in progress.

This spatial paper should be read in conjunction with the topic-based thematic papers, which provide insight into those issues affecting the Borough as a whole, as well as the individual component areas of West Lancashire.