

1 **Using a Conceptual Site Model for Assessing the Sustainability of Brownfield**  
2 **Regeneration for a Soft Reuse: A Case Study of Port Sunlight River Park (U.K.)**

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18 **Abstract**

19 Brownfield regeneration to soft reuse such as recreation and amenity has become  
20 increasingly common due to the demand for the potential environmental, social and economic  
21 benefits that it can deliver. This has led in turn to an increased demand for improved tools to  
22 support decision-making for this style of regeneration: tools which are simple to use, based  
23 on robust scientific principles and preferably which can ultimately link to quantitative or  
24 semi-quantitative cost-benefit analyses. This work presents an approach to assessing and  
25 comparing different scenarios for brownfield regeneration to soft reuse and other end-points.  
26 A "sustainability linkages" approach, based on sustainability assessment criteria produced by  
27 the UK Sustainable Remediation Forum (SuRF-UK), is developed and used in a refined  
28 qualitative sustainability assessment, and applied to develop a conceptual site model of  
29 sustainability, for a specific case study site (Port Sunlight River Park, U.K., a public leisure  
30 park established and maintained on a capped and managed former landfill site). Ranking, on  
31 an *ex post* basis, highlighted the clear sustainability advantages that the establishment of the  
32 Port Sunlight River Park has compared with a hypothetical non-development scenario. The  
33 conceptual site model provides a clearer basis for understanding cause and effect for benefits  
34 and disbenefits and a rationale for grouping individual effects based on their ease of valuation,  
35 providing a road map for cost-benefit assessments by (1) being able to match specific  
36 linkages to the most appropriate means of valuation, and (2) transparently connecting the  
37 sustainability assessment and cost benefit assessment processes.

38

39 **Keywords:** SuRF-UK guidance; sustainability linkage; qualitative sustainability assessment;

40 overall benefits

41

## 42 1 Introduction

43 The worldwide diversity of pollutants and contaminated sites, coupled with a scarcity of  
44 available land in urban spatial planning, has led to an increasing political significance for  
45 re-use of brownfield land to achieve sustainable land management. The importance of  
46 integrating brownfield regeneration strategies into land and urban planning is now a vital part  
47 of sustainable land use patterns and reducing the consumption of green field land by urban  
48 sprawl (HOMBRE, 2014). Brownfield regeneration can be for hard reuse (e.g. housing or  
49 infrastructure developments), soft reuse (e.g. green space or biomass production), or a  
50 combined approach. Soft reuse has historically tended to be overlooked (Bardos et al., 2015).  
51 However, responding to the sustainable development vision, there is a broad agreement  
52 among stakeholders that soft reuse of brownfield can bring major environmental, societal and  
53 economic benefits (Bardos et al., 2011 and 2016a; Cundy et al., 2016; Moffat, 2015). Indeed,  
54 it is becoming increasingly popular in a number of countries such as the US, UK, mainland  
55 European countries and China (BenDor et al., 2011; Bardos et al., 2016b; Schädler et al.,  
56 2012). There are now examples of brownfield generation for recreation and amenity in  
57 several countries, at sites ranging in scale and complexity from small urban parkland sites, to  
58 larger former mining sites and complex former industrial areas, such as:

- 59 • A mixed-use community, the London Olympics venue redevelopment as an example  
60 of a complex former industrial area, UK (DCMS, 2010).
- 61 • Urban green space, the Betteshanger Country Park on a former spoil tip in Kent, UK  
62 (Cundy et al., 2013).
- 63 • A public park, Gas Works Park on the site of the former Seattle Gas Light Company

64 gasification plant in Seattle, US.

- 65 • An integrated cultural district, Museum Folkwang of the regeneration of Ruhr  
66 industrial region in Essen, Germany ([Heidenreich, 2015](#)).
- 67 • An entertainment complex, Cool Docks transformed from derelict warehouses in  
68 Shanghai, China.

69 In order to gain support for soft reuse, it is important to not just illustrate sustainability  
70 in the redevelopment process, but also to understand how it can create value for stakeholders.  
71 Therefore, there has been a growing interest in valuing wider sustainability benefits by  
72 applying qualitative, semi-quantitative and quantitative methods including multi-criteria  
73 decision analysis (MCDA) ([Rosén et al., 2015](#)), life-cycle assessment ([EEA, 2014](#); [Favara et  
74 al., 2011](#)), and cost benefit analysis ([Söderqvist et al., 2015](#)). A number of sustainable  
75 remediation appraisal frameworks have recommended a tiered application of such  
76 methodologies to assess the sustainability of remedial options and help stakeholders form a  
77 disciplined risk management strategy ([CL: AIRE, 2011](#); [Holland et al., 2011](#); [HOMBRE; ISO,  
78 2017](#); [NICOLE, 2010](#); [SuRF-US, 2009](#)), and a number of tools have been developed to  
79 support application of these approaches in stakeholder decision making (e.g. [Cappuyns, 2013  
80 and 2016](#); [Huysegoms and Cappuyns, 2017](#)). As [Smith and Kerrison \(2013\)](#) suggested, the  
81 ideal sustainable remediation decision support tools should be quick and easy to use while  
82 requiring minimal input yet directing robust management decisions. Recently developed  
83 approaches include the UK Sustainable Remediation Forum (SuRF-UK) guidance and EU  
84 HOMBRE project Brownfield Opportunity Matrix - BOM ( [Beumer et al., 2014](#); [Bardos et al.,  
85 2016b](#); [CL: AIRE, 2011](#); [HOMBRE](#); [Menger et al., 2012](#)).

86           Within the UK, the SuRF-UK guidance now forms part of the general remediation /  
87 restoration guidance and is accepted and endorsed by UK regulators and cited in UK  
88 regulatory publications. It has also been used as a basis for sustainable remediation  
89 frameworks in a number of other countries ([Rizzo et al., 2016](#)), and was one of the drivers for  
90 the recent ISO standard on Sustainable Remediation ([ISO, 2017](#); [Nathanail et al., 2017](#)).  
91 Clearly, optimizing the management of brownfield land for sustainability purposes  
92 necessitates some form of sustainability assessment, and in the UK the general approach to  
93 setting out sustainability assessment (its preparation and definition) and also for qualitative  
94 assessments has been set out in a series of SuRF-UK guidance downloads (CL:AIRE, 2010,  
95 2011 and 2014). These are now used routinely by the UK brownfields / contaminated land  
96 sector.

97           The work reported here develops the SuRF-UK guidance to provide an improved  
98 approach to assessing and comparing the sustainability of brownfield restoration scenarios for  
99 a soft re-use, by integrating the use of sustainability linkages both in analysing standard  
100 guidance categories (in this case the SuRF-UK guidance categories) and for constructing an  
101 effective conceptual site model. The use of sustainability linkages, and the concept of  
102 Conceptual Site Models of Sustainability (first proposed by the European HOMBRE Project  
103 ([Bardos et al., 2016b](#); [Menger et al., 2013](#)) allows a more refined and enhanced SuRF-UK  
104 analysis for the sustainability assessment. We illustrate this approach by analysing two  
105 scenarios for a given site, first without and then with the sustainability linkages.

106           Following framing of the sustainability assessment to determine its objectives, scope,  
107 boundaries and methodology, a sustainability assessment comparing two scenarios for a case

108 study site, a public leisure park (Port Sunlight River Park (PSRP), U.K.) established and  
109 maintained on a previous landfill site, is presented using the methodology provided by  
110 SuRF-UK. This is then expanded and refined through the development of sustainability  
111 linkages and a conceptual site model for sustainability, to describe individual sustainability  
112 effects at the site in a way that might better support their valuation or even monetisation. The  
113 advantages and limitations of these approaches are then assessed, particularly with respect to  
114 “monetising” the sustainability benefits of land redevelopment and regeneration projects.

115

## 116 **2 Method**

### 117 2.1 Method outline

118 The sustainability assessment carried out is retrospective in nature (i.e. *ex post*), but its  
119 purpose was also to understand how useful it might be for a project or site manager in  
120 deciding approaches to planned or prospective projects in the future. It applied the prevailing  
121 UK sustainability assessment guidance for the UK (Bardos et al., 2016a; CL:AIRE, 2010,  
122 2011 and 2014), which is typically used *ex ante* for option appraisal.

123 This work also investigated the use of “sustainability linkages” and a conceptual site  
124 model for sustainability (Bardos et al., 2016b) to refine the SuRF-UK assessment carried out,  
125 and potentially describe individual sustainability effects in a way that might better support  
126 their valuation or even monetisation. It was also anticipated that any possible improvements  
127 from the use of a conceptual site model of sustainability for the case study might also inform  
128 development of the *ex ante* tool.

129 Hence the work reported here consisted of four stages:

- 130 • Framing the sustainability assessment to determine its objectives, scope, boundaries  
131 and methodology
- 132 • “Method A” sustainability assessment comparing the two scenarios was carried out  
133 using the methodology provided by SuRF-UK, including an MS Excel template,  
134 downloadable from [www.claire.co.uk/surfuk](http://www.claire.co.uk/surfuk), originally produced by AECOM. This  
135 spreadsheet records simple rankings (e.g. in this case 1 = best 2 = worst) across 15  
136 broad categories of sustainability criteria, five for each element of sustainability  
137 (environment, economy and society), shown in Table 1. These are then simply  
138 aggregated (summed) to provide overall rankings for each element of sustainability,  
139 and sustainability overall. The assessment is supported by a checklist of possible  
140 individual indicators / criteria that can be used to guide the broader category-based  
141 assessment ([CL:AIRE, 2011](#)). This approach is referred to as “Method A” in this  
142 paper.
- 143 • “Method B” sustainability assessment comparing the two scenarios was carried out in  
144 a greater level of detail by dividing the broad categories in Table 1 into individual  
145 sustainability linkages, based on the individual considerations in the Annex 1  
146 guidance checklist ([CL:AIRE, 2011](#)). These were used both as the basis of a  
147 conceptual site model of sustainability, and also to review and amend the broad  
148 category rankings used in the spreadsheet. This was done by applying the same  
149 ranking approach to the individual linkages within each category, and then reporting a  
150 mean ranking to the spreadsheet. This approach is referred to as “Method B” in this



151 paper.

- 152 • Individual sustainability linkages were combined as a network diagram to produce an  
153 overall conceptual model for sustainability considerations. One possible application of  
154 such a model might be to provide a road map for cost-benefit assessments by (1)  
155 being able to match specific linkages to the most appropriate means of valuation, and  
156 (2) transparently connecting the sustainability assessment and cost benefit assessment  
157 processes.

158

159 **Table 1 The overarching categories in the SuRF-UK sustainability assessment guidance, for each element**  
160 **of sustainability (CL:AIRE, 2011)**

Environment	Social	Economic
Emissions to air	Human health & safety	Direct economic costs & benefits
Soil and ground conditions	Ethics & equity	Indirect economic costs & benefits
Groundwater & surface water	Neighbourhoods & locality	Employment & employment capital
Ecology	Communities & community involvement	Induced economic costs & benefits
Natural resources & waste	Uncertainty & evidence	Project lifespan & flexibility

161

162

## 163 2.2 Case Study Site description, and timing of study

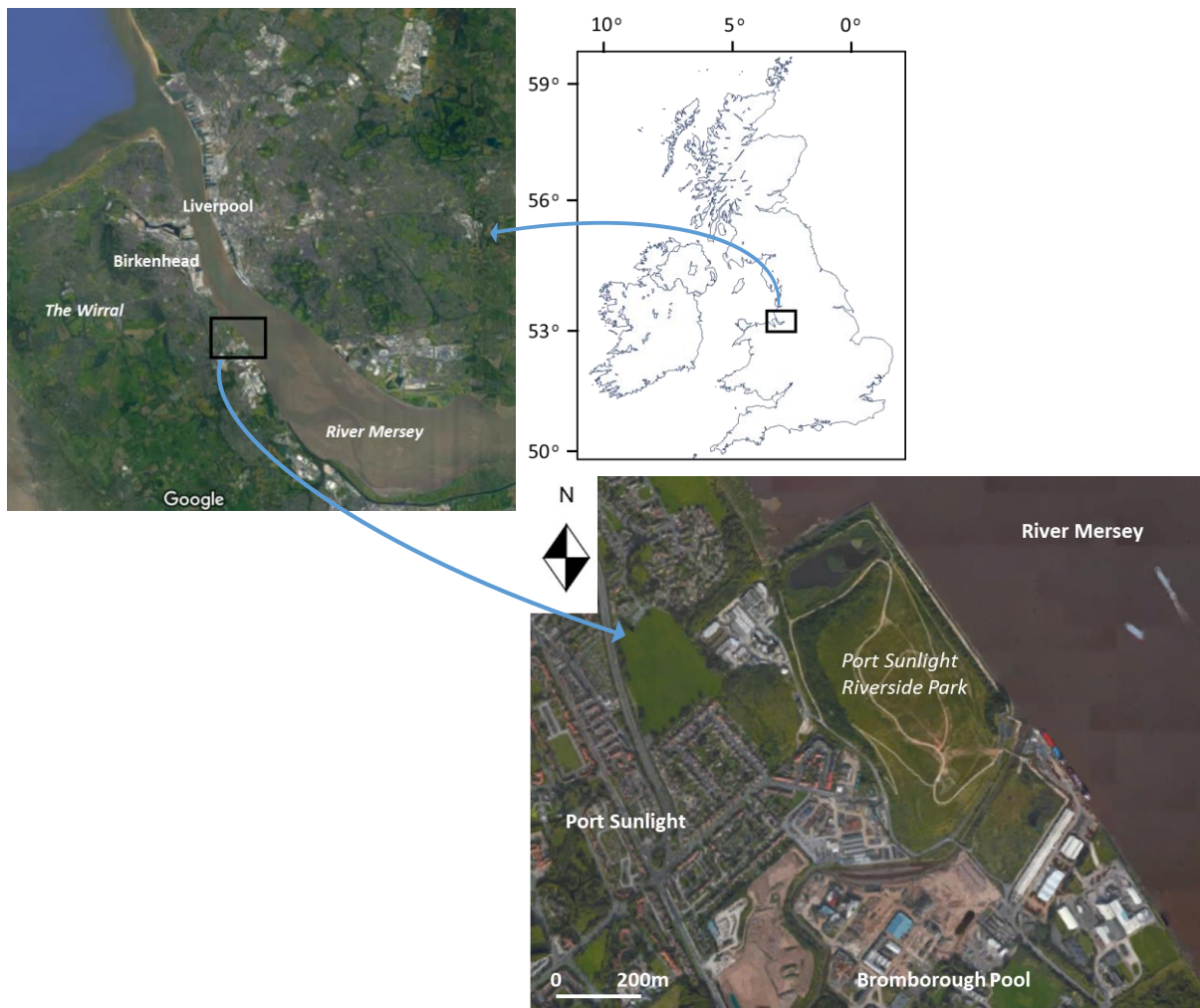
164 Port Sunlight River Park is a 28-hectare park near Birkenhead in Wirral, Merseyside,  
165 U.K. (Figure 1)<sup>1</sup> It is located on a former landfill site (see *Supplementary Information Figure*)  
166 which infilled the former Bromborough Dock between 1991 and 2006 ([the Land Trust, 2015a](#)  
167 [and 2015b](#)). The landfill was capped and covered by the waste management company (Biffa  
168 Waste Management) and leachate and gas management systems were put in place. The site

1

[https://thelandtrust.org.uk/space/port-sunlight-river-park/?doing\\_wp\\_cron=1523454123.0293600559234619140625](https://thelandtrust.org.uk/space/port-sunlight-river-park/?doing_wp_cron=1523454123.0293600559234619140625)

169 was passed over to the Land Trust on a 99 year lease and, after planning and design, was  
170 created as a riverside park in 2013 and opened to the public in 2014. The waste management  
171 company remains responsible for ongoing management and monitoring of the capping,  
172 landfill gas and leachate treatment.

173



174

175 **Figure 1 Case study site: Port Sunlight River Park, Wirral, Merseyside, U.K. Aerial photographic**  
176 **imagery Copyright 2017 Google. Map data Copyright 2017 Google.**

177

178

179

180 The condition of the site prior to the establishment of the parkland was of rough cover,  
181 very limited public access and a significant amount of debris on the surface (see

182 *Supplementary Information Figure*). Its waterfront location, interrupted footways, and the  
183 size of the site had a significant detrimental landscape impact. The Land Trust secured a £3.4  
184 million investment for a transformation project encompassing park creation and ongoing  
185 management, and established a partnership with the local charity, Autism Together, who  
186 manages the park on a day to day basis and leads local community engagement and  
187 involvement with the park.

188 The completed park provides visitors with a scenic waterfront and a variety of walks  
189 whilst a section of wetland to the north of the site, along with the adjacent River Mersey mud  
190 flats, is already a protected site for water birds. The qualitative sustainability assessment was  
191 carried out in 2016. The aim of the sustainability assessment was to understand the economic,  
192 environmental and social benefits/disbenefits of transforming the former landfill into a public  
193 open space, managed long term.

194 The sustainability assessment therefore compared two intervention scenarios:

- 195 (1) Establishment of Port Sunlight River Park (i.e. The transformation from a restored landfill  
196 site to park and long term management, including construction of roads, paths, landscaping,  
197 drainage and car parking; but excluding existing landfill management measures);  
198 (2) A hypothetical “no intervention” baseline, (i.e. which assumed that the site continued as a  
199 former landfill site being managed with all the appropriate planning condition and regulatory  
200 requirements following landfill closure).

201 The existing landfill management measures such as capping and gas/leachate  
202 management) are common to both scenarios, and so are excluded from the comparative  
203 assessment.

204 A large range of stakeholders have interests in this site and project (Table 2). This listing  
205 is not exhaustive as there are additional community interest groups with ambitions for the  
206 PSRP, and there are also opportunities for new or co-development of adjacent sites to provide  
207 additional amenity facilities now that PSRP has been established. In addition, other potential  
208 interested parties are local property owners who may have received beneficial impact, such as  
209 improvement in property values, or detriments such as from poor parking by visitors.

210 This paper reports on the provisional sustainability assessment outcomes derived from  
211 consultation with three “core” stakeholders (with the broadest understanding of the park  
212 development and outcomes, grey-shaded in Table 2), and does not include perspectives from  
213 the wider stakeholder listed in Table 2, except for (primarily technical) information available  
214 in documents, such as site restoration reports.

215

216

217 **Table 2 Potential stakeholders at the Port Sunlight River Park case study site, and their roles in the**  
 218 **SuRF-UK sustainability assessments undertaken in this paper. Grey highlighting shows the three “core”**  
 219 **stakeholders consulted during framing and execution of the sustainability assessment.**

Potential stakeholders	Role
University of Brighton (UoB)	Sustainability assessors.
Land Trust (corporate)	Broad perspectives of Land Trust sustainability interests and wider evidence base, access to past reports and site records.
Land Trust (restoration project manager)	Managed the operational work and interests and discussions with other stakeholders over the restoration project (e.g. contractors, adjoining premises).
Autism Together (Charity – park users and park management)	Autism Together provide the on site management of the PSRP, and also represent one of its major users from the community.
Forestry Commission	Assisted in developing the project concept and securing funding. Technical contributor to Land Trust restoration thinking.
Biffa	Manage the containment and capping of the site, and its leachate and gas management systems.
Environment Agency	Waste management regulator, water body regulator.
Wirral Council	Local planning authority, environmental health.
Port Sunlight Village Trust	Conservation and historical context of the Port Sunlight legacy.
Friends of PSRP	Community interest group initiated by the Land Trust who support the PSRP.
United Utilities (WWTP)	Have a water treatment facility that adjoin the site and an interest through their rights to shared access for a roadway on site.
Unilever	Unilever is the landowner of the area of edges of the River Mersey and the River Dibbin and the Land Trust has a long lease on this land, which forms part of the PSRP site.
Essar Oil Limited (pipeline)	Manages a high pressure oil pipeline that crosses the north-eastern segment of the site.
Wirral Wildlife Trust	Community group / charity for local conservation and local nature reserves, they keep records of wildlife in the PSRP and guide walks open to the public.
Gillespies / WSP	The main site restoration contractors for the development of the PSRP (design and implementation).
SUSTRANS (Charity)	Use of the site for a cycle hub to help adults and children learn to ride.

220

221 **2.3 Framing the sustainability assessment**

222 A SuRF-UK sustainability assessment follows three broad stages: Preparation,  
 223 Definition, Execution (Figure 2). The preparation and definition stages provide the ‘framing’  
 224 for the third, execution stage, thus:

225 (1) The preparation stage sets out the rationale for the assessment, the project or site being  
226 considered, the scenarios being compared, any opportunities and constraints that may  
227 apply, who will be consulted and when, and how the assessment will be reported and  
228 communicated.

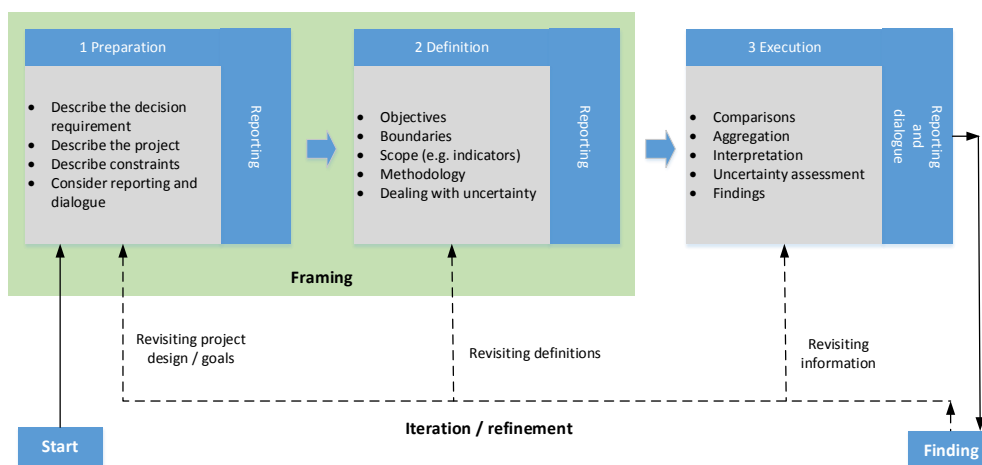
229 (2) The definition stage summarizes and formats the preparation work as a series of  
230 objectives for the assessment, and then goes further to set careful boundaries for the  
231 work, how the comparison will be made, and how uncertainties will be dealt with.

232 (3) The execution stage applies the framing developed to a sustainability assessment. The  
233 framing is specific to each site / project. The assessment is based on comparison of  
234 different options across a range of sustainability considerations, which are then  
235 aggregated, for example to provide overall rankings for each of the three elements of  
236 sustainability (environmental, economic, social) or sustainability as a whole. In this  
237 study, a simple ranking was used for the assessment: 1= good compared to the other  
238 scenario, or 2= poor compared to the other scenario. Where no clear difference was  
239 evident the rankings for both were assigned to 1.

240 In this study the framing was developed during a meeting at the Land Trust's Head  
241 Office (which then went on to carry out a ranking). Both the framing and execution were  
242 made on the basis of open discussion between the "core" stakeholders: University of  
243 Brighton (UoB); Land Trust (Corporate Communications and Fundraising Officer); Land  
244 Trust (the restoration project manager) and Autism Together (Charity – park users and park  
245 management) and in accordance with the Land Trust's wishes. These initial conclusions were  
246 followed up by dialogue (e-mail and telephone) to reach the endpoints described in this paper.

247 This output should be seen as a provisional assessment that would then need to be refined in  
 248 consultation with the wider stakeholder interests listed in Table 2. Although the assessment is  
 249 provisional in that not all of the stakeholders listed in Table 2 have been engaged with, its  
 250 outcomes do allow a comparison between Method A and Method B and to make an  
 251 provisional conceptual site model of sustainability.

252



253

254 **Figure 2 A schematic overview of the SuRF-UK approach to sustainability assessment (CL:AIRE, 2014)**

255

256 2.4 Development of the sustainability linkages

257 The HOMBRE concept collates individual sustainability effects as “sustainability  
 258 linkages”, analogous to the way in which potential “contaminant or pollutant linkages” are  
 259 identified for contaminated site risk assessment and management best practice (Cheng et al.,  
 260 2017; Environment Agency, 2009; Nathanail, 2005). A “sustainability linkage” describes the  
 261 connection between a cause (a pressure or a change), something that might be affected (i.e. a  
 262 receptor) and the mechanism by which a pressure or change affects a receptor (see Figure 3).  
 263 It is consistent with the Driving Forces – Pressure – State of the DPSIR model which is

264 widely used in environmental policy development ([Smeets and Weterings, 1999](#)). A  
265 sustainability effect requires all three components to be in place. Individual linkages can be  
266 collated and combined to provide an overall conceptual model which also has the benefit of  
267 identifying and hence reducing unintentional duplications of sustainability criteria ([Bardos et](#)  
268 [al., 2016a](#)).

269 For example, in Figure 3 a potential sustainability pressure or driver might be the numbers  
270 of visitors coming to the park, where previously few people visited the site as a former landfill.  
271 A number of mechanisms may deliver consequences to different receptors. For example, one  
272 might envisage an increase in road traffic in the locality which might have some negative  
273 consequences for the local community through different processes (vehicle emissions,  
274 inconvenience from congestion, road safety). But increased visitor numbers might also bring  
275 benefits for instance in terms of pride of place and more money spent locally. The linkages  
276 assist in making these individual cause and effect chains explicit, in a way that different  
277 management options can be more readily compared, and different linkages can be more  
278 explicitly valued.

279 The use of sustainability linkages also facilitates the generation of an overall conceptual  
280 model created by combining linkages in a single network diagram, for instance as is practiced  
281 in contaminated land risk assessment ([Nathanail and Bardos, 2004](#)).

282





Visitors to the Port Sunlight River Park	1) Increased road traffic generates greater exhaust emissions affecting local air quality 2) Increased road traffic generates greater congestion 3) Increased road traffic causes greater road safety concerns 4) Increased sense of pride / place 5) Increased economic activity in local shops and businesses	1) Local community          2) Local business
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284 **Figure 3 A sustainability linkage, and five possible examples (not exhaustive) for the Port Sunlight River**  
 285 **Park case study site.**

286

287 Initial identification of the sustainability linkages was made in discussion between the  
 288 stakeholders at the face to face meeting while working through the SuRF-UK “Annex 1”  
 289 guidance checklist. This was conducted as a comprehensive discussion of what were  
 290 perceived as being the individual effects and how these could be summarised in terms of  
 291 pressure/change --> mechanism --> and receptor. A useful additional outcome of this  
 292 discussion was the identification of redundancies or duplications, for example where effects  
 293 on air quality might be double counted within the broad environmental headline “emissions  
 294 to air” and the broad societal headline “neighbourhoods and locality”.

295 **2.5 Development of the conceptual site model for sustainability (network diagram)**

296 A network diagram was constructed by listing each discrete linkage in a table of three  
 297 columns: pressure/change; mechanism; receptor, and sorting these by each category so that

298 three lists of discrete pressures, mechanisms and receptors were apparent. These individual  
 299 items were transferred to a diagram and interconnecting arrows used to show the linkages. In  
 300 this way each discrete element only needed to be named once.

### 301 3 Results

#### 302 3.1 Framing the sustainability assessment

##### 303 3.1.1 Preparation

304 Table 3 provides a summary of the Preparation Stage of the framing process.

305

306 **Table 3 Summary of the Preparation Stage for the Port Sunlight River Park Sustainability Assessment**  
 307 **Framing (see text for further discussion)**

Element	Description	
Decision Requirements	To understand the relative sustainability of the transformation scenario of a former landfill site into a public park compared with a “no intervention” baseline scenario where the site continued as a managed former landfill planning condition and regulatory requirements following landfill closure. This is a retrospective assessment, and so encompasses some information which would not have been apparent <i>ex ante</i> . However, the assessment applies the same methodology.	
Project/site Description	Comparative sustainability assessment of the development of the PSRP on the former Bromborough Dock Landfill Site (see Section 2.2) compared with the baseline scenario.	
Project Opportunities and Constraints	Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No significant soil or water contamination issues identified during site investigation;</li> <li>• Bird populations protected and connected with an adjacent RAMSAR site;</li> <li>• Access to the river, due to available land between the site and the river;</li> <li>• Capping and drainage will be maintained by external contractor;</li> <li>• Management of the site by a local charity, also creating opportunities for sheltered employment.</li> </ul>
	Constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On-site leachate and gas management plant constrains park design;</li> <li>• Heavy infrastructure cannot be placed on top of the landfill due to settlement issues and a buried oil pipeline;</li> <li>• Existing soil cover over landfill is of poor quality and has high pH;</li> <li>• Site topography (steep slope and uneven ground) limits path width, access for users with mobility difficulties, and maintenance tasks;</li> <li>• The access road is externally owned which put constraints on site access.</li> </ul>
Reporting and dialogue	Dialogue	16 stakeholder groups were identified (Table 2) and all are candidates to provide additional information and perspectives. However, this provisional sustainability

		assessment is based on the views of a more limited group, with the intention of further consultation and discussion at some point in the future to improve the robustness of the sustainability assessment in any subsequent iterations.
	Reporting	The following outputs are/were planned: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A technical report for Land Trust;</li> <li>• A briefing summary for wider stakeholders and any other interested individual to be produced by Land Trust;</li> <li>• Additionally, academic papers from the research team (mentioned here for the sake of completeness).</li> </ul>

308

309 3.1.2 Definition

310 Table 4 provides a summary of the outcomes of the Definition Stage, i.e. the definitions  
311 of objectives, boundaries, scope and approaches to methodology and uncertainty agreed by  
312 the “core” stakeholder group. All 15 of the overarching SuRF-UK sustainability categories  
313 were accepted as forming the scope of the sustainability assessment. However, not all of the  
314 individual detailed considerations within each category of the SuRF Annex 1 guidance were  
315 considered relevant for the sustainability assessment by the “core” group. In addition, some  
316 effects of potential interest, for example potential public health benefits from access to green  
317 space were felt to be missing. The scope was therefore refined from the original checklist (in  
318 line with SuRF-UK’s guidance which recognises that scope is site/project specific). For  
319 Method A these considerations informed a *single* ranking process made for each headline  
320 category.

321 The process of reviewing which individual considerations to consider was critical to  
322 Method B, which aggregated rankings from individual linkages. The underlying assumption  
323 was a conservative one: that if there is no *valid* reason to discard it, the criterion should  
324 remain. Overall there are 73 specific suggestions in the SuRF-UK “Annex 1” checklist. 25 of

325 these were considered not relevant for the PSRP sustainability assessment, and the rationale  
326 for discarding them was recorded. For example, the checklist identifies within the headline  
327 category for “emissions to air” four broad types of effects: climate change, acid rain related  
328 emissions, ground air quality and ozone depleting substances. Of these only one was felt  
329 relevant for PSRP: climate change emissions. Acid rain emissions or emissions of ozone  
330 depleting substances were not thought likely to take place at any significant scale for either  
331 options, and ground air quality impacts were considered as being covered by the  
332 considerations of “neighbourhood and locality” in the PSRP context. However, the discussion  
333 also concluded that there were different effects under “climate change” that should be  
334 separated out to better differentiate between the options being compared (PSRP and baseline):

- 335 • The effect on atmosphere (receptor) from vehicle and machine emissions,
- 336 • The effect on atmosphere as landfill capping degrades potentially allowing escape of  
337 methane / carbon dioxide, which would be affected by the soil and vegetative cover  
338 maintained on the site,
- 339 • The mitigation of greenhouse gas release through sequestration into soil over the  
340 landfill cap, which would also be affected by the soil and vegetative cover  
341 maintained on the site.

342 Two linkages were added: one was “human health benefits” under social category of  
343 human health and safety, the other was “development of sustainable transport opportunities”  
344 under social category of neighbourhoods and locality.

345 The 50 individual sustainability effects identified by this discussion informed the broad  
346 category rankings recorded for “Method A”. They also went forward for subsequent

347 elaboration as sustainability linkages for “Method B” and the conceptual site model. The  
 348 process of agreeing which sustainability effects were to be considered/discarded, are  
 349 summarised in *Supplementary Information 1* of this paper.

350

351 **Table 4 Summary of the Definition Stage for the Port Sunlight River Park Sustainability Assessment**  
 352 **Framing (see text for further discussion)**

Element	Description	
Objectives	<p>The objectives of the sustainability assessment to be carried out were agreed as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide a qualitative understanding of the sustainability gains of the PSRP establishment on Bromborough Dock Landfill compared with a baseline, “no intervention” strategy.</li> <li>• To investigate how a more detailed sustainability assessment based on sustainability linkages (“Method B”) might affect sustainability outcomes from the SuRF-UK method (“Method A”).</li> <li>• To develop a conceptual site model using sustainability linkages and examine its potential usefulness in valuing or monetising the qualitative sustainability assessment.</li> <li>• To provide an opening or provisional sustainability assessment for development in consultation with a wider stakeholder group.</li> </ul>	
Boundaries	System	The operations and activities for i) no development, or ii) ongoing management of the defined public park, both excluding ongoing capping, gas and leachate management typical of basic landfill site maintenance. This includes operations that might take place off site, for example the disposal of wastes to a different landfill site.
	Life Cycle	The consumption of resources by site management and restoration activities, such as materials for footpaths, maintenance of equipment, energy etc, deterioration of capital equipment but excluding the existing cap and gas and leachate management systems.
	Distance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local effects               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Onsite effects: those within the park border, including the surface of the former landfill, lake, car parking, visitor centre, oil pipelines and drainage.</li> <li>○ Offsite effects: local and wider effects affecting the adjacent features, including residential dwellings, the RAMSAR / wetland intertidal areas, the water, gas and leachate treatment plants, land surrounding the park and local environment (i.e. within circa five miles of the PSRP).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Wider: effects occurring that are not solely proximal.</li> </ul>
	Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short term (temporary) effects are those related to restoration / management activities.</li> <li>• Long term (permanent) effects, those persisting after the restoration work is completed.</li> </ul>
Scope	All 15 SuRF-UK overarching indicator categories were considered. The Annex 1 guidance checklist was used to identify individual criteria.	
Methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SuRF-UK guidance to provide sustainability criteria to be comparatively ranked in the two scenarios, analysed in the generic approach in Method A).</li> <li>• A conceptual site model would be developed to depict all single linkages in Method A), and all</li> </ul>	

	<p>sustainability linkages in Method B).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In future work: Valuation methods would be used to estimate the wide overall benefits at a quantitative level. These might be able to be identified and applied by making use of the sustainability linkages developed in Method B).</li> <li>• “Method A” and “Method B” as described above.</li> </ul>	
Uncertainties	Definitional uncertainty	This uncertainty describes where there might be disagreement or uncertainty lack of clarity on what should be considered within the assessment framing, e.g. objective, scope and boundary. The focus group meeting achieved a clear and agreed definition for the sustainability assessment.
	Informational uncertainty	This uncertainty describes where there might be insufficient, outdated or unavailable information affecting the identification of individual sustainability linkages and quantitative valuation. The sustainability assessment process identified a number of informational uncertainties, which while not considered to affect the overall <i>qualitative</i> rankings, would have an impact on any subsequent semi-quantitative (scoring/weighting) assessment, or quantitative (valuation based) assessment.
	Methodological uncertainty	This uncertainty describes where there might be disagreement among stakeholders on how the sustainability assessment should be carried out. No such disagreement was evident for the <i>provisional</i> qualitative sustainability assessment reported here.
	Stakeholder uncertainty	The reliability of sustainability assessment is improved by the engagement of stakeholders, where a greater breadth of stakeholder types and opinions are considered (CL:AIRE, 2010). The assessment reported here is a provisional outcome from a small stakeholder grouping. Were wider consultation to take place Land Trust’s preference would be for targeted meetings with individual stakeholders focusing on the sustainability considerations of greatest interest to the, using the provisional sustainability assessment and its framing as a starting point.

353

354 3.2 Qualitative SuRF-UK sustainability assessment: “Method A” and “Method B”

355 Table 5 shows the rankings that the “core” stakeholders agreed for each of the 15  
356 overarching SuRF-UK categories, using “Method A”. It also shows (in brackets) how these  
357 changed when the mean rankings for each overarching category found by “Method B” were  
358 substituted. Each ranking was based on a discussion of the available evidence and the  
359 different stakeholder meetings at the meeting at Land Trust HQ, and minor changes made  
360 subsequently as a result of further e-mail / telephone discussions. These changes might be

361 triggered because of an apparent inconsistency or because of information contained in a site  
 362 report / document reviewed subsequent to the meeting. A record of the rationale (and  
 363 supporting evidence) for each headline category ranking was recorded in the “Method A”  
 364 spreadsheet template, which is available as Supplementary Information 2 to this paper.

365 The individual rankings determined under “Method B” which were averaged for  
 366 inclusion in Table 5, along with their rationale, are included in Supplementary Information 3  
 367 to this paper. “Method A” rankings were either 1 or 2. “Method B” rankings were either 1 or  
 368 2 or one decimal value between them.

369

370 **Table 5 Ranking results for the two scenarios (Establishment of the Port Sunlight River Park, and a No**  
 371 **Intervention Baseline) using the overarching categories from the SuRF-UK sustainability assessment**  
 372 **guidance. Rankings are shown from Method A and Method B (in brackets).**

Assessment criteria	Scenario Establishment of PRSP	Scenario 2 No intervention baseline
<b>Environmental</b>		
Emissions to air	2 (1.33)	1 (1.67)
Soil and ground conditions	1 (1)	2 (1.8)
Groundwater and surface water	1 (1)	2 (2)
Ecology	1 (1.2))	2 (1.8)
Natural resources and waste	1 (1.4)	2 (1.6)
<i>Environmental Total</i>	<i>6 (5.9)</i>	<i>9 (8.9)</i>
<b>Economic</b>		
Direct economic costs and benefits	2 (1.5)	1 (1.5)
Indirect economic costs and benefits	1 (1)	2 (2)
Employment and employment capital	1 (1)	2 (2)
Induced <sup>2</sup> economic costs and benefits	1 (1)	2 (2)
Project lifespan and flexibility	1 (1)	2 (1.7)
<i>Economic Total</i>	<i>6 (5.5)</i>	<i>9 (9.2)</i>
<b>Social</b>		
Human health and safety	1 (1.3)	2 (1.5)
Ethics and equality	1 (1)	2 (2)

<sup>2</sup> This SuRF-UK term essentially describes a gearing effect of a project encouraging wider economic activity / investment

Neighbourhoods and locality	1 (1.2)	2 (1.8)
Communities and community involvement	1 (1)	2 (2)
Uncertainty and evidence	1 (1)	2 (2)
<i>Social Total</i>	<i>5 (5.5)</i>	<i>10 (9.3)</i>

373 The overall message from application of both “Method A” and “Method B” is that the  
374 establishment of the PSRP is more sustainable (shown by the lower Environmental,  
375 Economic and Social total ranking values, Table 5) than the baseline scenario (i.e. leaving the  
376 area as a capped and managed but otherwise unimproved landfill site would have been (the  
377 baseline). The pattern for the three main elements of sustainability: environmental, economic  
378 and social is the same, i.e. that the PSRP establishment was more sustainable, with only slight  
379 differences in summed rankings between Method A and Method B.

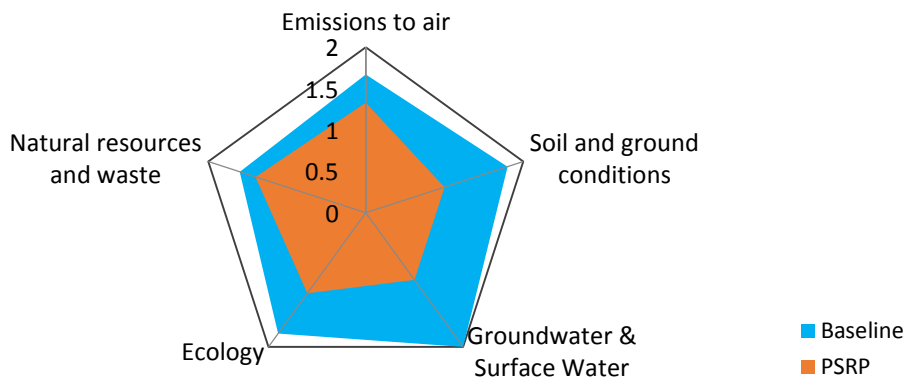
380 However, the detail of the individual category rankings differ between the single  
381 rankings of Method A and the averaged rankings across sustainability linkages of Method B.  
382 The pattern of the 15 overarching (headline) categories is different between the two methods.  
383 For “Method A” 13 of the 15 categories indicated that the establishment of the park was more  
384 sustainable, with the “emissions to air” and “direct costs and benefits” categories being a  
385 lower ranking for the park than the baseline. However for “Method B” the establishment of  
386 the park was ranked as more or equally sustainable for all 15 headline categories. The  
387 averaged ranking for “direct costs and benefits” was the same for the two scenarios; and for  
388 “emissions to air” the averaged ranking was slightly better for the PSRP scenario.

389 In addition, the difference in averaged ranking, than the Method A ranking, was <1 for a  
390 further 7 categories. These averaged rankings reflect the greater resolution of considering  
391 effects as individual sustainability linkages rather than attempting a single overall ranking for  
392 each broad headline category. The use of sustainability linkages as a discipline ensured closer



393 scrutiny of the comparison process and what effects exactly were being compared.

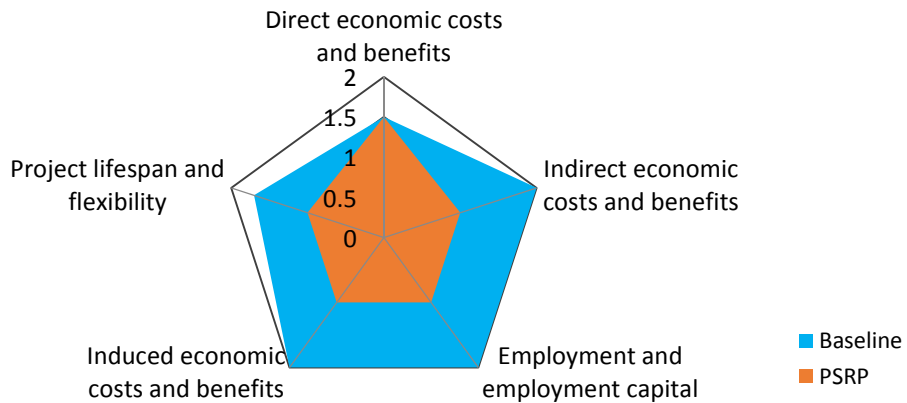
394 While this qualitative sustainability assessment does not deliver a monetised valuation  
395 of sustainability, it does provide a very useful snapshot of the sustainability benefits of the  
396 PSRP establishment, especially when viewed visually as radar plots, as shown in Figure 4a,  
397 4b and 4c.



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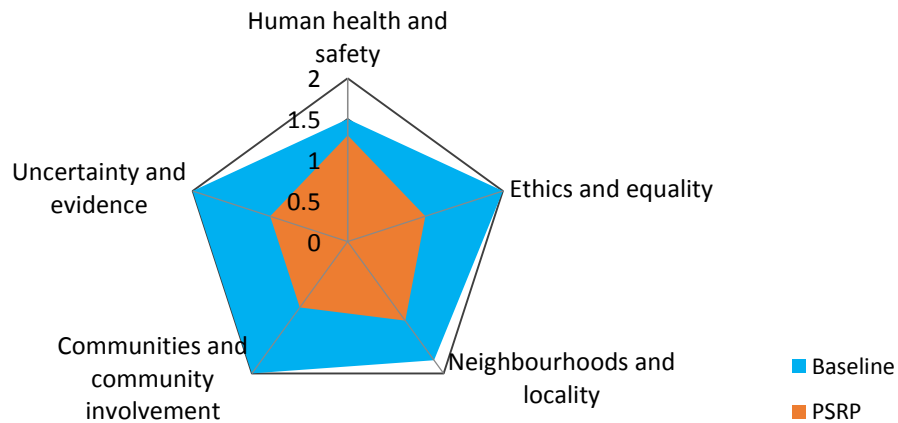
**(a) Environmental**



400

401

**(b) Economic**



402

403

(c) Social

404

**Figure 4 Radar plots of rankings across the three elements of sustainability for SuRF-UK headline categories for the two scenarios using “Method B”. A smaller area indicates a lower overall ranking = “more sustainable” The relative sizes of the two areas indicate how close the rankings were.**

405

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Had there been significant uncertainties in the qualitative assessment, these could have been examined using a simple form of sensitivity analysis. This sensitivity analysis would have been to examine the effect on the rankings of the uncertainties on the outcome of the qualitative sustainability assessment, for example:

409

- If some stakeholders preferred a different definition of the sustainability assessment (e.g. boundaries, scope).
- If stakeholders disagreed about the evidence or rationale for a particular indicator/criterion ranking, the effect of changing the ranking order for that particular criterion.

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However, at least at this provisional stage there were no differences in opinion on framing or ranking. There does remain an uncertainty because the sustainability assessment is based on relatively few stakeholders (as previously mentioned).

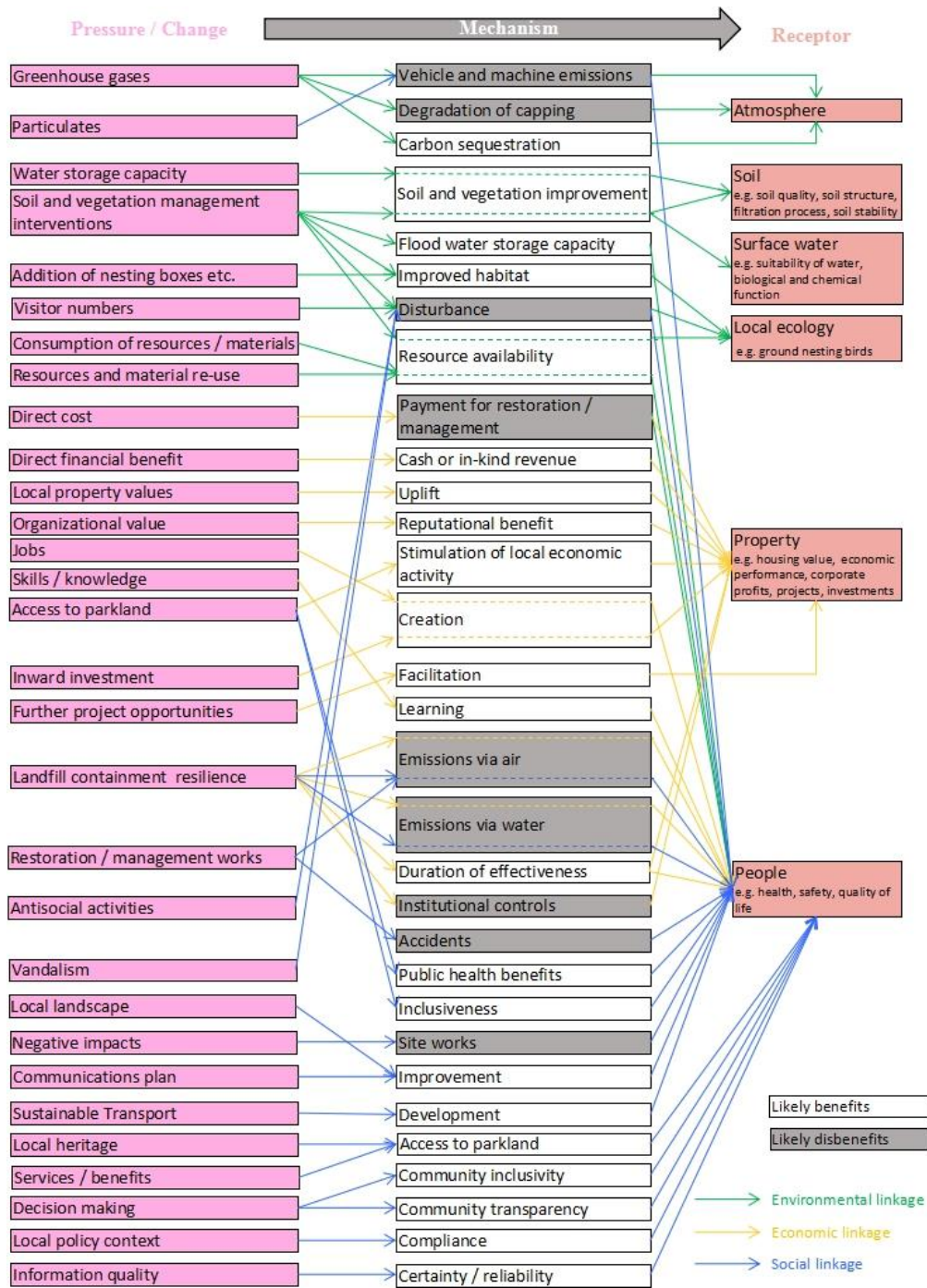
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420 3.3 Conceptual site model of sustainability

421 A network was constructed using all the sustainability linkages to provide a conceptual  
422 site model for sustainability, as shown in Figure 5. This describes both the delivery of the  
423 project and the ongoing use and maintenance of the park. The diagram is organised across  
424 three columns: pressures / changes (left-hand column in pink), mechanisms by which a  
425 pressure or change might affect a specific receptor (middle column), and receptors (right  
426 column in red). The mechanisms are coloured depending on whether they are considered  
427 deleterious as (gray) or beneficial (white). Linkages are shown as arrows, colour-coded to  
428 environmental, economic and social elements of sustainability, using green, yellow and blue  
429 respectively. In total, 30 pressures, 31 mechanisms and 6 receptors encapsulated the 50  
430 linkages identified.

431



432

433

**Figure 5 A conceptual site model for sustainability (network diagram) for the Port Sunlight River Park (see text for further discussion).**

434

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#### 439 **4 Discussion**

440 Integration of sustainability principles and metrics in contaminated land remediation  
441 projects is becoming increasingly important worldwide (Rizzo et al., 2016). Several standards  
442 and guidance documents have been developed to describe or codify approaches to  
443 “sustainable remediation” and the more narrowly defined “green remediation”, which focuses  
444 on environmental aspects only (ASTM, 2013a and 2013b; CL:AIRE, 2010 and 2014; ITRC,  
445 2011a and 2011b; ISO, 2017; SURF-US, 2009; US EPA, 2008). The use of a range of  
446 individual “sustainability” criteria to define scope is common to all of these approaches, and  
447 the SuRF-UK framework methodology is broadly consistent with all of these methods and  
448 explicitly consistent with ISO 18504:2017. While there are some regional differences, the use  
449 of qualitative approaches is likely to be dominant on grounds of cost, simplicity and ease of  
450 communication (compared with quantitative or semi-quantitative approaches (Bardos et al.,  
451 2016a). Conceptual site models of sustainability present the logical flow from one step to the  
452 next, as such they are a form of logic-chain model (Millar et al., 2001). Logic chains have  
453 been used to understand success in the context of brownfield regeneration to a soft-end use  
454 (Doick et al., 2009), namely to understand what a regeneration project must achieve in order  
455 to meet its stated aims and objectives and to describe monitoring and evaluation required to  
456 demonstrate such achievements. While application of logic-chains in this context have, so far,  
457 only been applied post-hoc, their description and commonality with conceptual site models of  
458 sustainability implies logic-chains could be added to this framework in order to extend its  
459 remit beyond *ex ante* appraisal, to include project success evaluation. Alternatively, the  
460 conceptual site model for sustainability framework could be used directly to inform

461 monitoring protocols, and the potential of such an application should be the focus of future  
462 research.

463 The qualitative assessment used here, based on either the broad SuRF-UK headline  
464 categories or specific linkages, has shown clear sustainability advantages that the  
465 establishment of PSRP has over a baseline of having left the site under its previous  
466 management regime. This assessment has been carried out on an *ex post* basis. This may have  
467 provided a stronger ranking for the PSRP establishment than would have been the case for an  
468 *ex ante* comparative sustainability assessment because a number of outcomes of the park's  
469 establishment were clearly evident, which might have been more conjectural *ex ante*. These  
470 include in particular economic and social factors like the facilitation of further development  
471 projects centred on an adjacent site, the widening involvement by other charities and the  
472 expanding use of the site for training and education purposes.

473 This paper's findings are consistent with previously reported work which also suggests  
474 that qualitative sustainability assessment can be an effective basis for decision making,  
475 avoiding the cost and effort of more intensive semi-quantitative and quantitative approaches  
476 ([Harclerode et al., 2016](#); [Ridsdale and Noble, 2016](#); [Smith and Kerrison, 2013](#)). Moreover,  
477 the use of sustainability linkages (Method B) in this case study was found to facilitate the  
478 sustainability assessment for the PSRP site discussion, and in our view provide a more  
479 nuanced assessment than the broader headline category approach of "Method A".

480 One of the wishes of the Land Trust was to be able to monetise the sustainability  
481 benefits of their PSRP project, in a way that could be replicated across their existing projects,  
482 and to support the planning of new projects. Cost benefit analysis tools are regularly used to

483 assess the value of built developments versus their costs in the brownfields sector. However,  
484 their usefulness for soft re-use of brownfields is limited because of the way in which they  
485 value externalities such as landscape benefits or health benefits. Available valuation tools  
486 have significant technical limitations for some externalities, they can have poor levels of  
487 acceptance for some stakeholders; and often they lack transparency in approach, use and  
488 assumptions, especially for non-expert practitioners ([Ackerman, 2008](#); [Atkinson and Mourato,  
489 2008](#); [Cellini and Kee, 2010](#); [Haninger et al., 2015](#); [Linn, 2013](#)).

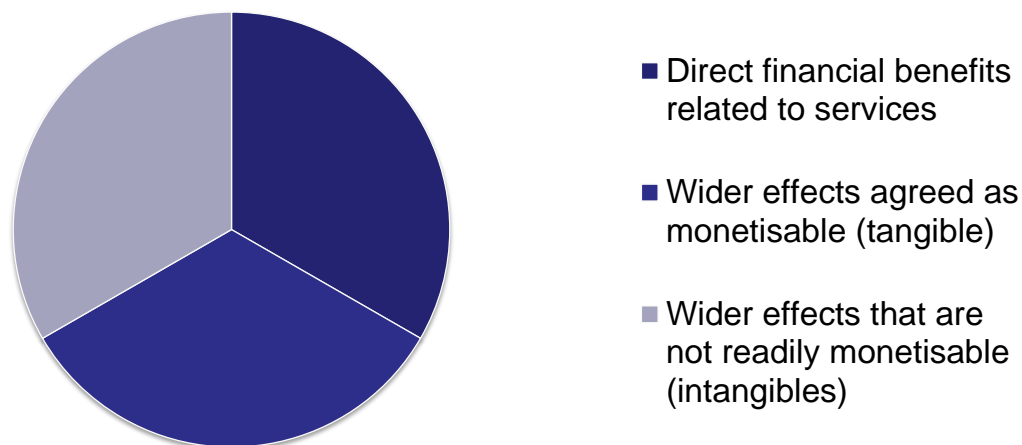
490 The suggestion of this project was that the sustainability linkages could be used to assist  
491 a more robust valuation by: (1) ensuring that any cost benefit assessment was consistent with  
492 a conceptual model of sustainability, rather than being based on a different set of premises;  
493 and (2) providing a better and more targeted valuation approach. This suggestion is rather  
494 simple and divides the sustainability linkages that comprise the conceptual model into three  
495 groups as shown in Figure 6:

- 496 • Some linkages relate to planned or anticipated cost or return – allowing a direct  
497 financial model to be applied.
- 498 • Some linkages relate to wider effects (i.e. externalities) that can be readily and  
499 broadly agreed as being linked to effects that are economically tangible and so more  
500 readily valued, for example, value uplift in surrounding properties. A recent study  
501 carried out for the Land Trust provides economic valuations for property value uplift  
502 and local business benefits ([Cárdenas Giraldo et al., 2017](#)).
- 503 • Some linkages relate to wider effects (i.e. externalities) that at least one stakeholder  
504 considers economically intangible, i.e. not easy to value in a reliable way, for

505 example the value of an improved landscape or a public health benefit.

506

507



508

509 **Figure 6 Classifying sustainability linkages by ease of monetisation (note that this figure is purely**  
510 **illustrative and not quantitative)**

511

512 This categorisation may support stakeholders of different types finding agreement on  
513 where monetary valuations can be readily deployed, and those where disagreements between  
514 them are likely.

515 Cost-benefit analysis (CBA) strives to monetise all costs and benefit items. There are  
516 arguments for complementing a CBA with other types of assessments (see e.g. [Söderqvist et](#)  
517 [al., 2015](#)) since there may be other ethics that are relevant (e.g. rights-base and duty-based)  
518 for societal decision-making. Thus, valuation or assessment of effects of interventions from a  
519 sustainability perspective should also include other types of methods than monetary valuation.  
520 Moreover, there are well known limitations of quantification techniques used in CBA ([Bardos](#)  
521 [et al., 2016a](#)) that mean that an overarching approach based on monetisation of all factors  
522 may of limited persuasiveness for some stakeholders. On the other hand investment decisions,



523 whether by public or private sector organisations are made on the basis of some form or  
524 return on investment, whether in directly financial terms, or some form of wider notional  
525 returns via CBA. Consequently, the Land Trust, needs to makes its investment cases in  
526 monetary terms both in order to demonstrate “value for money” of its existing projects and to  
527 give confidence in its ability to deliver “returns” for future projects.

528       There are different ways forward from this conundrum. (1) The “investor” (funder)  
529 simply takes the view that for all its shortcomings they will continue to base their decisions  
530 on CBA, which will mean that some stakeholders might feel what is valuable to them is not  
531 properly represented. (2) The investment decision could be based on a combined approach, in  
532 which the CBA is based on the direct return and wider effects (externalities) agreed as  
533 monetisable (or possible to monetise in terms of time and money) by all or most of the  
534 stakeholders involved with the site, and an alternative approach to valuation is taken for what  
535 are perceived to be intangibles. Such an approach recognises that economic valuation may  
536 not be founded on the same ethical basis as considerations of social or environmental values  
537 ([Söderqvist et al., 2015](#)). (3) The cost benefit appraisal for “investors” could be closely  
538 aligned to a qualitative sustainability conceptual model. This approach recognises  
539 that ”investors” have a specific need for an overarching monetisation to provide a defensible  
540 rationale for their investment decision. However, the transparency and rigour of this CBA  
541 could be considerably enhanced by aligning it with a qualitative conceptual site model of  
542 sustainability which is more broadly accepted by the wider project stakeholders.  
543 Furthermore, the model can be used to find the most appropriate matches between  
544 quantification tools and specific sustainability linkages, rather than using a single “one size

545 fits all” approach to monetisation. A benefit of this transparency is that it can support the  
546 elaboration of alternative valuation viewpoints by different stakeholder interests, which  
547 perhaps allows for a range of estimates of benefit (or detriment) to be considered in decision  
548 making.

549 This third option might be particularly useful for bodies like the Land Trust that both  
550 need to attract public and private sector investors or funders, but also be able to show with  
551 some rigour that they have both made a robust monetisation, and one that can be queried by  
552 their different audiences and stakeholders. The next phase of work we plan is a review of  
553 different quantitative valuation techniques to identify those that are most appropriate for the  
554 different sustainability linkages identified in the PSRP conceptual site model of sustainability.

555 Our hope is that this might provide more effective valuation by applying the tools that  
556 best fit each particular linkage, and also a more transparent approach because the cost  
557 benefits assessment or valuation framework will be consistent with the (qualitative)  
558 sustainability assessment.

559 A possible direction of travel might be to aim for finding consensus on which  
560 sustainability linkages are generally considered as important by stakeholders. For those that  
561 are seen as less tangible, whether a benefit or a detriment, instead of attempting a direct  
562 valuation it might be easier to cost the delivery of an equivalent benefit by an alternative  
563 means, or similarly for avoiding a detriment. This is analogous to some forms of  
564 determination of payments for ecosystem services ([Salzman et al., 2018](#)) albeit on a more  
565 localised scale, and across all three elements of sustainability (environmental, economic and  
566 social).

## 567 **5 Conclusions**

568 The qualitative sustainability assessment used here, based on either the broad SuRF-UK  
569 headline categories (Method A) or specific sustainability linkages (Method B), has shown  
570 clear sustainability advantages that the establishment of the Port Sunlight River Park has over  
571 a baseline of having left the site under its previous management regime. This paper’s findings  
572 are consistent with previously reported work that suggests that qualitative sustainability  
573 assessment can be an effective basis for decision making, avoiding the cost and effort of more  
574 intensive semi-quantitative and quantitative approaches. The use of sustainability linkages  
575 (Method B) in this case study was found to facilitate the sustainability assessment for the site  
576 discussion, and provides a more nuanced assessment than the broader headline category  
577 approach of “Method A”. While direct monetisation of sustainability benefits was not  
578 possible, the conceptual site model based on sustainability linkages provides a clearer basis  
579 for understanding cause and effect for benefits and disbenefits and a rationale for grouping  
580 individual effects based on their ease of valuation. This potentially provides a road map for  
581 cost-benefit assessments by (1) being able to match specific linkages to the most appropriate  
582 means of valuation, and (2) transparently connecting the sustainability assessment and cost  
583 benefit assessment processes.

584

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596

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