



# **DRAFT WEST LANCASHIRE INTERIM HOUSING POLICY**

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## **Executive Summary**

The Council published an interim policy guidance note in January 2009, clarifying how Policy DE1 of the West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan would take account of Planning Policy Statement 3 and the adoption of the North West Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS). The note did not represent a change to Policy DE1 itself, but, given the new RSS housing requirements resulted in there no longer being a housing land oversupply in West Lancashire, the note advised that Policy DE1 would permit brownfield residential development within Skelmersdale, Ormskirk /Aughton and Burscough, subject to other relevant Plan policies being satisfied.

Subsequent monitoring of residential permissions and completions and work on the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment have indicated a declining supply of housing and low numbers of affordable housing being delivered.

In order to avoid dropping below a five year supply of deliverable housing sites in the future, and in order to deliver more affordable housing, the restrictions of Policy DE1 are to be partially lifted to allow:

- Residential development on brownfield and greenfield sites within Skelmersdale, Ormskirk /Aughton and Burscough.
- Residential development on brownfield sites and small-scale residential development on greenfield sites (i.e. 10 units or fewer) within Tarleton, Up Holland, Parbold, Hesketh Bank, Banks, Appley Bridge, Halsall (Village), Haskayne, Newburgh, Rufford, New Cut Lane (Halsall), Segars Lane (Halsall), Brown Edge (Scarbrick) and Tontine.

Any residential development will need to be in accordance with all other relevant Development Plan policies, including, but not limited to, the following policies of the Local Plan:

- Policy DS2 (Green Belt),
- Policy DS3 (Safeguarded Land),
- Policy DS4 (Open Land on the Urban Fringe),
- Policy GD1 (Design of Development),
- Policy GD2 (Developer Contributions to Infrastructure)
- Policy EN8 (Open Space),
- Policy DE3 (Affordable Housing),
- Policy DE5 (Employment Development),
- Policy DE14 (Development Opportunity Sites) and
- Policy SC1 (Sports, Recreational, Leisure and Cultural Facilities).

The effects of this change in policy will be carefully monitored. If it is considered that wider planning objectives for West Lancashire or the surrounding area are being undermined, or if housing land supply drops to below five years, this interim policy note will be reviewed.

Although this interim policy note is not an official Development Plan Document, it will be treated as a material planning consideration in the assessment and determination of planning applications for residential development until the adoption of the West Lancashire LDF Core Strategy.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

1. This document contains an interim policy for residential development within West Lancashire Borough. It takes into account the effects of the restrictions in Policy DE1 of the West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan which, coupled with the recent recession, have resulted in a decrease in the housing land supply in West Lancashire. It recognises that national policy in PPS3 and regional policy the North West Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS), both of which postdate Policy DE1, prescribe a more positive approach towards house building than is contained in Policy DE1. It also recognises the need to deliver more affordable housing across the Borough.
  2. There is a possibility that the continued restraint of Policy DE1, coupled with current economic circumstances, could result in the supply of housing land in West Lancashire dropping below five years. The Council is working on a Local Development Framework Core Strategy and Site Allocations Development Plan Document, which will enable a review of housing policy and the allocation of more sites to boost the short, medium and longer-term housing land supply. However, the expected timescales for the adoption of these documents (2012 and 2013 respectively at the earliest) are such that a revision to Policy DE1 is considered necessary in the immediate term, to pre-empt any loss of a five year housing land supply, and to guide development during the preparation of the Core Strategy.
  3. The policy outlined overleaf is consistent with the principles for residential development outlined in PPS3 and the RSS, including:
    - locating dwellings in the most suitable places with ready access to facilities, jobs, services, infrastructure and public transport.
    - prioritising brownfield development over greenfield development
    - providing a mix of housing in terms of tenure and price
    - aligning with the RSS regional development framework and its strategy for the location of dwellings within West Lancashire.
- These principles and policies are listed in more detail in Section 3 of this document.
4. Consultation will take place on this interim policy during early spring 2010.

Further information on the material contained in this document may be obtained from:

### **Housing Policy Matters**

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## **2. PROPOSED NEW INTERIM HOUSING POLICY FOR WEST LANCASHIRE**

Subject to other relevant policies of the West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan being satisfied, the following residential development will be permitted:

- Residential development on brownfield and greenfield sites within Skelmersdale, Ormskirk /Aughton and Burscough.

Residential development on brownfield sites and small-scale residential development on greenfield sites (i.e. 10 units or fewer) within Tarleton, Up Holland, Parbold, Hesketh Bank, Banks, Appley Bridge, Halsall (Village), Haskayne, Newburgh, Rufford, New Cut Lane (Halsall), Segars Lane (Halsall), Brown Edge (Scarisbrick) and Tontine.

In addition, in accordance with Policy DE1, the following types of residential development will be permitted within West Lancashire:

- b) the conversion of buildings within the main urban areas of Skelmersdale, Ormskirk /Aughton and Burscough, provided that they are not allocated for, currently used for, or their last use was for, employment uses, and the conversion would have significant urban regeneration benefits;
- c) housing which forms a key element within a mixed use regeneration project within Skelmersdale, or within, or directly adjacent to, Ormskirk and Burscough Town Centres;
- d) residential development within the priority regeneration area of Skelmersdale, provided that the land is not allocated for, currently used for, or previously used for, employment use, and the land can be demonstrated to be not needed for community or public open space use. It must be demonstrated that the development will contribute to the wider regeneration of the Town itself. This may include the replacement of dwellings lost through demolition, where redevelopment may necessitate a lower density. Residential development on the greenfield site at Whalleys will need to conform to Policy DE2;
- e) agricultural workers dwellings where there is a proven need and where they need to be located in a specific location;
- f) replacement dwellings in situ where there is no more than a one-for-one replacement;
- g) schemes which provide 100% affordable housing, or accommodation to meet the specific needs of a section of the community, within the settlements identified on the Proposals Map to meet the identified needs of the local area;
- h) the conversion of a rural building in the Green Belt for residential use will be considered where it meets a specific local need, or an identified local housing need in less remote locations, or where it can be demonstrated that the building is inherently unsuitable for any other use.

All proposals for residential development will be required to comply with other relevant Local Plan policies including, but not limited to:

- Green Belt: there will be no change to Green Belt policy (Policy DS2).
- Safeguarded Land: residential development will not be permitted on land safeguarded under Policy DS3.
- Open Land on the Urban Fringe (or 'Protected Land'): Policy DS4 will continue to apply.
- Design principles set out in Policy GD1 will apply. The requirement in GD1 part xvi that development be designed to prevent sewerage problems will be given particular weight in Burscough and any other settlement with similar sewerage infrastructure issues.
- Green Spaces: Policy EN8 will continue to apply.
- Affordable Housing: Policy DE3 will apply to developments of 10 dwellings or more. Due to the small nature of sites that may come forward in rural settlements through this Interim Housing Note, this threshold may be dropped lower subject to the results of the affordable housing viability study that is currently being undertaken.
- Employment Land: Policy DE5 will continue to apply for sites currently in employment use, or whose most recent use was for employment purposes.

- Development Opportunity Sites (Mixed-Use Development Sites): Policy DE14 will continue to apply.
- Recreational Land: Policy SC1 will continue to apply on land allocated for recreational use on the WLRLP Proposals Map, and to other land in recreational use.
- Transport Sites: Policy SC7 will continue to apply.

Other policies not specifically mentioned above will continue to apply where relevant, for example with respect to flood risk.

In addition to the design criteria in Policy GD1, development on all sites should conform to the following criteria:

1. the density of development should be a minimum of 30 dwellings per hectare, rising to at least 50 dwellings per hectare at sites with access to good public transport facilities;
2. any affordable housing required by Policy DE3 shall be provided on the same site; and
3. recreational facilities and/or public open space shall be provided to meet the needs of the residents of the new housing and arrangement should be made for their maintenance.

### **Policy Justification**

The above policy represents a change to Policy DE1 in that it allows for residential development in certain settlements listed under Policy DE1.3 of the West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan, where previously, residential development was limited to 100% affordable housing schemes. It is considered that the above policy is consistent with the principles and policies set out in Planning Policy Statement 3 and the North West RSS.

### **Development in the Rural Settlements**

Within the rural settlements of Tarleton, Up Holland, Parbold, Hesketh Bank, Banks, Appley Bridge, Halsall (Village), Haskayne, Newburgh, Rufford, New Cut Lane (Halsall), Segars Lane (Halsall), Brown Edge (Scarbrick) and Tontine, residential development will be permitted on brownfield sites and small scale development on greenfield sites (10 dwellings or fewer). Proposals for “backland” residential development will need to be very carefully considered with particular attention paid to design and the impact of schemes on neighbouring properties.

The above settlements have been chosen on account of their sustainability, i.e. their relatively good provision of services and facilities, and/or public transport access. These settlements have been ranked within the West Lancashire Sustainable Settlement Study. The sustainability of settlements has been assessed having regard to the presence in each settlement of a range of facilities, and in particular to ease of access to the five key services of a GP surgery, primary school, food shop, Post Office and bus stop. For areas close to the boundaries of neighbouring local authorities (e.g. New Cut Lane, adjacent to Sefton, and Tontine, adjacent to Wigan), the assessments have examined the presence of services within a 1000m radius of these areas.

The availability of infrastructure is another important consideration in assessing the sustainability of sites. LDF evidence base work on infrastructure will be used amongst other sources of information to assess levels (or expected levels) of infrastructure provision across the Borough. In particular, it is known that there are problems with drainage and sewerage infrastructure in Burscough, and thus the amount of new housing that can be granted there will be limited unless improvements are made to the settlement’s infrastructure.

Within the rural settlements, proposals for housing as part of a mixed use scheme which would help deliver rural regeneration, for example improvements to social infrastructure or better employment, will be considered on their merits.

#### Development on greenfield sites

Residential development will be permitted on small greenfield sites (i.e. up to and including 10 units) within the Borough's settlements listed above, subject to compliance with other Local Plan policies. The amount of greenfield development that is permitted will be carefully monitored, and if levels of permissions on greenfield sites are considered to be undermining wider policy objectives, including the RSS target of 65% of residential development being on previously developed land, appropriate management action will be taken, in line with PPS3 paragraph 67. There will be a general presumption against the development of large greenfield sites (i.e. sites of more than 10 units) in advance of the adoption of the LDF Core Strategy.

#### Green Belt

There will be no change to Green Belt policy, including settlements "washed over" by Green Belt.

#### Development on Safeguarded Land

Policy DS3 safeguards a number of sites for development needs which may be identified for the years beyond 2016. This policy will continue to apply. However, the residential development potential of land allocated under Policy DS3 will be examined as part of the Core Strategy and Site Allocations DPD preparation process, as development needs to 2027 and beyond are considered. In advance of the adoption of the LDF Core Strategy, proposals for the residential development of sites allocated under Policy DS3 will be considered premature and will not be supported.

#### Development on Open Land on the Urban Fringe

Policy DS4 (Open Land on the Urban Fringe<sup>3</sup>) will continue to be applied in the Borough. Thus, in terms of residential uses, development on land allocated under this policy will continue to be limited to small-scale affordable housing to meet an identified local need, provided it can be demonstrated that there are no suitable sites available within the built up area, and that if there are no such sites, other land also designated under Policy DS4 closer to the village centre has been considered first, followed by sites further from the village centre where a problem of dereliction would be removed.

#### Affordable Housing

Policy DE3 will continue to apply to developments of 10 dwellings or more. One of the Council's key priorities is the delivery of more affordable housing and the result of this Interim Policy Note will be to allow housing in smaller rural settlements (something not envisaged by Policy DE1) where there is a pressing need for affordable housing. For developments of fewer than 10 dwellings, Replacement Plan Policy GD2 requires contributions towards affordable housing. A viability assessment for affordable housing in West Lancashire is currently being carried out, the results of which will be used to determine the threshold (i.e. the number of units) for which affordable housing units will be required as part of a residential development. As part of the consultation on this document views are sought on whether the threshold should be dropped, and whether this should be for those settlements where housing will now be permitted, or for all settlements.

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<sup>3</sup> Land allocated under Policy DS4 is labelled on the WLRLP Proposals Map legends as "Protected Land", rather than "Open Land on the Urban Fringe".

### Development on Employment Land

There will be a presumption against the residential development of sites currently in employment use, or whose most recent use was for employment purposes (typically Use Classes B1, B2 and B8, but not restricted to these). When assessing proposals for specific sites, the Council will take into account the findings of the Joint Employment Land and Premises Study once it is approved.

Where a site forms part of a mixed-use regeneration scheme in Skelmersdale, or in or adjacent to Ormskirk or Burscough Town Centres, then some housing may be appropriate to help facilitate the regeneration scheme, in line with Replacement Plan Policy DE1 part 2b.

### Development Opportunity Sites (Mixed-Use Development Sites)

Policy DE14 lists 8 sites available for development for a wide range of uses excluding residential development (unless specifically referred to in the policy or its justification), providing they comply with other policies in the WLRLP. This policy will continue to apply as at present.

### Development on Green Spaces

Policy EN8 will continue to apply to proposals for the residential development of land designated in the WLRLP under this policy as Green Space.

### Recreational Land

Policy SC1 of the WLRLP will continue to apply to proposals for development of land allocated for recreational use on the WLRLP Proposals Map, and to other land in recreational use. If it turns out that there is a surplus of recreational land, and that some could appropriately be released for other uses, this will be dealt with through the LDF process. In advance of the LDF's adoption, proposals for residential development on recreational land will be resisted.

### Development on Transport Sites

Sites designated on the WLRLP Proposals Map under Policy SC7 (transport-related sites) will continue to be protected from development that would prejudice their capacity to provide transport-related facilities, or function as transport sites. In addition, sites not marked on the Proposals Map, but having the potential to provide the types of development listed in Policy SC7 parts 1-13, will be protected from inappropriate development.

Other relevant Local Plan, RSS and national policies not specifically mentioned above will continue to apply where relevant, for example with regard to flood risk.

## **Monitoring and Review**

Regular and careful monitoring of permissions for residential development granted as a result of the above changes to Policy DE1 will be undertaken. If it is considered that the changed policy is resulting in too many greenfield permissions, contrary to RSS targets, or in a significant departure from the approach to locating development set out in WLRLP Policy DS1, or in a departure from wider RSS policy objectives, or if it is considered that the pattern of grants of permission and/or development in the Borough could undermine the emerging LDF strategy, this interim policy will be re-examined and appropriate management action will be taken, in line with PPS3 paragraph 67 and RSS paragraph 7.18(e). Similarly, if housing land supply drops to below five years, this interim policy will be reviewed.

This note is not an official Development Plan Document, but will be treated as a material planning consideration to be taken into account by the Council when determining planning applications for residential development.



### **3. POLICY CONTEXT**

#### **Background to Policy DE1**

5. Policy DE1 (Residential Development) of the Replacement West Lancashire Local Plan was first used for development control purposes by the Council in November 2002. It was initially published as supplementary planning guidance, and subsequently incorporated into the Replacement Plan, which was adopted in 2006.
6. Policy DE1 is a restrictive policy. When first prepared, one of its purposes was to restrain development in West Lancashire in order to help address the problem of market failure in other parts of the North West, in line with regional planning policy at the time. Policy DE1 also sought to curb the numbers of residential permissions and completions in West Lancashire in order to avoid significantly exceeding the housing targets set out in the Joint Lancashire Structure Plan and the then North West RSS.
7. Policy DE1 is a policy of restraint in terms of new permissions for housing which has been referred to by some parties as a “moratorium”. It restricts the granting of permissions for new residential development to seven specific categories listed in the policy (listed in the Appendix 1 to this document).
8. In January 2009, the Council published an interim guidance note on Policy DE1. It allowed for residential development on brownfield sites within the three main settlements of the Borough (i.e. Skelmersdale, Ormskirk and Burscough), provided this did not contribute towards a housing land oversupply. Development was subject to certain provisos, such as the land not having been used previously for employment development. This update did not represent an alteration to Policy DE1, but was simply a change in the way the policy applied, given the effect of the new housing requirements in the 2008 North West RSS which meant that there was no longer a housing land oversupply in West Lancashire.
9. The approach of Policy DE1 has been consistent with wider planning objectives for the North West, in particular with respect to urban regeneration in the metropolitan and other areas. Policy DE1 has been consistently applied across the Borough and upheld on appeal between 2002 and 2009.

#### **The need for an interim residential development policy**

10. Annual monitoring has shown that Policy DE1 has had some positive effects since its adoption, for example an increase in the proportion of new housing in the Borough’s more sustainable locations and the proportion on brownfield land. However, Policy DE1 has also resulted in a decrease in the number of new permissions for housing, which over time has reduced the number of housing completions. The recent recession and decline in the market for apartments have served to accelerate this reduction in housing land supply, both in terms of the number of new planning applications being submitted and also the deliverability of sites with extant planning permission.
11. There is a possibility that the continued restraint of Policy DE1, coupled with current economic circumstances, could result in the supply of housing land in West Lancashire dropping below five years. The Council is working on a Local Development Framework Core Strategy and Site Allocations Development Plan Document, which will enable a review of housing policy and the allocation of more sites to boost the short, medium and longer-term housing land supply. However, the expected timescales for the adoption of these documents (2012 and 2013 respectively at the earliest) are such that a revision to Policy DE1 is considered necessary in the immediate term, to pre-empt any loss of a five year housing land supply, and to guide development during the preparation of the Core Strategy.

12. The restrictions of Policy DE1 have meant that the number of affordable units being granted via Policy DE3 (i.e. as a proportion of market housing developments) has been low, due to the low numbers of permissions granted for market housing. As can be seen from the table below, the number of affordable housing units that have been granted permission in rural areas via market housing developments is zero, with affordable housing development only coming via 100% affordable schemes delivered by RSLs or the Council.

**Table 1 Affordable housing grants of permission and completions since the implementation of Policy DE1 in November 2002.**

	<b>Ormskirk / Aughton / Burscough</b>	<b>Skelmersdale</b>	<b>Rural areas</b>
<b>100% Affordable Housing Schemes</b>			
Total units granted	2	12 <sup>#</sup>	79
Units completed so far	0	0	43
<b>Affordable Housing Units as a result of Policy DE3 (i.e. via a planning permission for market housing)</b>			
Total units granted	33*	0	0*
Units completed so far	16*	0	0*

\* In addition, there have been 64 “low cost market housing” completions at Burscough and 12 in rural areas which were considered as affordable housing at the time when planning permission was granted, but which now are not counted to be affordable housing, according to the definition given in PPS3 (2007).

<sup>#</sup> In addition, planning permission was granted for 32 affordable units at Abbeystead, Skelmersdale, but this permission lapsed without being implemented.

### **National policy: Planning Policy Statement 3 (Housing)**

13. Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) was published in November 2006, and came into force fully in April 2007. The document sets a requirement for local planning authorities to identify and maintain a rolling five year supply of deliverable sites for housing, deliverable being defined as meaning (PPS3 paragraph 54):
- available now,
  - suitable – offering a suitable location for development and contributing to the creation of sustainable, mixed communities;
  - achievable – there is a reasonable prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years.
14. The following principles in relation to housing development are espoused in PPS3:
- > High quality housing that is well-designed, built to a high standard, and environmentally friendly (PPS3 paragraphs 10, 12-19)
  - > A mix of housing, particularly in terms of tenure and price, to support a wide variety of households in all areas, both urban and rural, and to include both low-cost market housing and affordable housing (paragraphs 10, 20-30)
  - > Housing developments in suitable locations, which offer a good range of community facilities and with good access to jobs, public transport, key services and infrastructure (paragraphs 10, 16, 36, 37). When identifying sites in LDF documents, account should be taken of the need to provide housing in rural villages to enhance or maintain their sustainability (paragraph 38).
  - > Effective use of land, in particular the re-use of land that has been previously developed (paragraphs 40-44). If the proportion of development on brownfield land is significantly below RSS /LDF targets, Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) may consider invoking development control policies in relation to development on particular categories of land, for example, rejecting applications on greenfield sites (paragraph 67).
  - > Efficient use of land, in particular the development of land at an appropriate density, having regard to locally available infrastructure and facilities, accessibility, the characteristics of the area, and design (paragraphs 46-52).
  - > Sustainable development: in addition to the locational aspects of development as highlighted above, this term covers the environmental impact of development: this should be minimised, taking account of climate change and flood risk (paragraph 10).
15. Paragraphs 68-74 cover development control. Paragraph 69 requires that LPAs have regard to the following factors when deciding planning applications:
- Achieving high quality housing;
  - Ensuring developments achieve a good mix of housing, reflecting the accommodation requirements of specific groups, in particular families and older people;
  - The suitability of a site for housing, including its environmental sustainability;
  - Using land effectively and efficiently;
  - Ensuring the proposed development is in line with planning for housing objectives, reflecting the need and demand for housing in, and the spatial vision for, the area, and does not undermine wider policy objectives e.g. addressing housing market renewal issues.
16. If an up-to-date five year supply of deliverable sites cannot be demonstrated, PPS3 paragraph 71 requires local planning authorities to consider planning applications for housing favourably, having regard to the policy considerations in the PPS, including the considerations in paragraph 69, as listed above.

## **Regional Policy: The Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West (RSS)**

17. The North West RSS was adopted in September 2008 and forms part of the development plan for West Lancashire. It contains a set of policies and development principles applying across the North West of England, and sets the housing requirement for the Borough.
18. Policies DP2-DP9 set out the RSS's spatial development principles. These are as follows:
- DP2: Promote sustainable communities – fostering sustainable relationships between homes, workplaces and other concentrations of regularly used services and facilities.
  - DP3: Promote sustainable economic development
  - DP4: Make the best use of existing resources and infrastructure: giving priority to developments which build upon existing concentrations of activities and existing infrastructure, and do not require major investment in new infrastructure. Policy DP4 also sets out a sequential approach to development:
    - Firstly – use of existing buildings (including conversion) within settlements, and previously developed land within settlements;
    - Secondly – use of other suitable infill opportunities within settlements, where compatible with other RSS policies;
    - Thirdly – the development of other land where this is well-located in relation to housing, jobs, other services and infrastructure.
  - DP5: Manage travel demand; reduce the need to travel and increase accessibility: development should be located so as to reduce the need to travel, especially by car, and to enable people as far as possible to meet their needs locally. All new development should be genuinely accessible by public transport, walking and cycling, and priority will be given to locations where such access is already available.
  - DP6: Marry opportunity and need – priority should be given to linking areas of economic opportunity with areas in greatest need of regeneration.
  - DP7: Promote environmental quality – by, *inter alia*, promoting good quality design, maximising opportunities to regenerate derelict areas, and reclaiming derelict land.
  - DP8: Mainstreaming rural issues – avoiding treating rural areas and their needs and issues in isolation.
  - DP9: Reduce emissions and adapt to climate change – this policy lists a number of example measures that could be taken, including increasing urban density, encouraging better built and more energy efficient homes, minimising the threats from increased flood risk, and using sustainable urban drainage systems.
19. Policies RDF1-4 set out the Regional Development Framework. In terms of West Lancashire:
- Skelmersdale is the highest priority settlement in West Lancashire for development;
  - The next highest levels of development in West Lancashire will be in Key Service Centres (KSCs) – settlements which act as service centres for surrounding areas, providing a range of services, and which have good public transport links to surrounding towns and villages. Previously, Ormskirk and Burscough were designated as KSCs; now it will be for the LDF to define the Borough's KSCs on the basis of their current role as service providers.
  - Local Service Centres are settlements which provide a more limited range of services to the local community. In these settlements, small scale development will be permitted to help sustain local services.
  - Exceptionally, development will be permitted in the open countryside, but in terms of housing, the RSS limits this to affordable housing.
20. Policy L4 of the RSS sets a housing requirement of a minimum of **5,400 new dwellings over the period 2003-2021** (net of clearance /replacement) for West Lancashire Borough. This averages out to 300 net new dwellings per annum.

21. Paragraph 7.18(e) of the supporting text for Policy L4 set out the strategy for locating the new dwellings in “South West Lancashire” (defined as the combined area of West Lancashire Borough and Sefton Metropolitan Borough) as follows:

“Continued careful monitoring and management of housing provision will be necessary to ensure that new housing development does not result in an adverse cumulative impact on local and neighbouring housing markets. Housing provision should focus on meeting local market and affordable housing needs, especially in Ormskirk, Burscough and the northern part of Sefton; and on development in sustainable locations well served by public transport to support agreed local regeneration strategies in Skelmersdale...”

*(The rest of the paragraph refers to Sefton Borough.)*

22. Policy W4 (Release of Allocated Employment Land) presumes against the release of allocated employment sites for other uses. If Local Authorities are mindful to release sites they should be satisfied that an appropriate supply of sites is available for employment uses, and that if required, there are replacement sites available of equal or better quality, or alternative means of incorporating employment land needs.

### **Local Development Framework (LDF) preparation in West Lancashire**

23. Preparation of the West Lancashire LDF is progressing well. The Council consulted on Core Strategy options during late summer 2009, and expects to adopt the Core Strategy in 2012. A Site Allocations Development Plan Document will be prepared shortly after the Core Strategy, with an expected adoption date of 2013.
24. At the time of writing this interim policy, the Core Strategy preferred option has not yet been chosen. However, the development strategy for the Borough will become clearer over 2010 and 2011. Careful monitoring of the effects of changes to residential development policy in West Lancashire will be necessary in order that conflict between current policy and the LDF strategy can be avoided. The emerging Core Strategy and Site Allocations document will be given increasing weight as they progress towards adoption.

### **Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)**

25. A SHLAA has been prepared for West Lancashire Borough in partnership with neighbouring Knowsley and Sefton Boroughs. The report has not yet been completed, but it is expected to be finished and adopted in early 2010. The findings of the draft SHLAA indicate a limited supply of deliverable sites in the short term, taking into account the current restrictions of Policy DE1, and less than fifteen years’ supply of appropriate sites in areas excluded from the Green Belt.

### **Employment Land and Premises Study**

26. In addition to the SHLAA, West Lancashire Borough Council has been partnering Sefton, Knowsley and Halton Councils in a joint Employment Land and Premises Study. It is expected that this study will be completed and approved early in 2010. The draft final study has indicated a general shortfall in the amount of employment land across West Lancashire. With the exception of a small number of specifically mentioned sites, the study recommends that land currently or most recently in employment use should remain in employment use. This is broadly consistent with Policy DE5 of the Local Plan.
27. Whilst the Employment Study is not a policy document, it will form an important part of the LDF evidence base, and will be taken into account as the Core Strategy is prepared. It is considered prudent to align the interim housing policy with the findings of the Employment Study.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan Policy DE1 (Residential Development) as set out in the adopted Local Plan.**

The housing requirement for West Lancashire, set out in the Joint Lancashire Structure Plan 2001 - 2016, of 3,390 dwellings for 2001 - 2016, will be met from the following sources:-

1. Completions between April 2001 - March 2004 and existing commitments (excluding replacement dwellings) as set out below:-

	No. Dwellings
(i) Completions April 2001 - March 2004	1,280
(ii) Dwellings with planning permission @31/3/04	1,403
(iii) Dwellings on windfall sites granted permission 1/4/04 to 2/8/04	41
(iv) Dwellings on windfall sites - applications delegated by Committee, awaiting completion of S106 agreements @ 2/8/04	53
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,777</b>

2. Due to the large number of existing commitments, new residential development, including the renewal of existing planning consents, will only be granted for:-

- a. the conversion of buildings within the main urban areas of Skelmersdale, Ormskirk /Aughton and Burscough, provided that they are not allocated for, currently used for, or their last use was for, employment uses, and the conversion would have significant urban regeneration benefits;
- b. housing which forms a key element within a mixed use regeneration project within Skelmersdale, or within, or directly adjacent to, Ormskirk and Burscough Town Centres;
- c. residential development within the priority regeneration area of Skelmersdale, provided that the land is not allocated for, currently used for, or previously used for, employment use, and the land can be demonstrated to be not needed for community or public open space use. It must be demonstrated that the development will contribute to the wider regeneration of the Town itself. This may include the replacement of dwellings lost through demolition, where redevelopment may necessitate a lower density. Residential development on the greenfield site at Whalleys will need to conform to Policy DE2;
- d. agricultural workers dwellings where there is a proven need and where they need to be located in a specific location;
- e. replacement dwellings in situ where there is no more than a one-for-one replacement;
- f. schemes which provide 100% affordable housing, or accommodation to meet the specific needs of a section of the community, within the settlements identified on the Proposals Map to meet the identified needs of the local area;
- g. the conversion of a rural building in the Green Belt for residential use will be considered where it meets a specific local need, or an identified local housing need in less remote locations, or where it can be demonstrated that the building is inherently unsuitable for any other use.

Other residential development not covered by the above criteria will only be permitted on brownfield sites within Skelmersdale, Burscough and Ormskirk /Aughton if it would not result in an oversupply of housing land in the District.

In addition to the design criteria in Policy GD1, development on all sites should conform to the following criteria:-

1. the density of development should be a minimum of 30 dwellings per hectare, rising to at least 50 dwellings per hectare at sites with access to good public transport facilities;
2. any affordable housing required by Policy DE3 shall be provided on the same site; and
3. recreational facilities and/or public open space shall be provided to meet the needs of the residents of the new housing and arrangement should be made for their maintenance.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Useful Internet Links**

West Lancashire Planning Policy Pages:

[www.westlancs.gov.uk/planningpolicy](http://www.westlancs.gov.uk/planningpolicy)

West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan:

[www.westlancs.gov.uk/local-plan](http://www.westlancs.gov.uk/local-plan)

West Lancashire Residential Development Policy Page:

[http://www.westlancs.gov.uk/planning/local\\_plan,ldf\\_plan\\_policy/latest\\_planning\\_policy\\_new/residential\\_development\\_policy.aspx](http://www.westlancs.gov.uk/planning/local_plan,ldf_plan_policy/latest_planning_policy_new/residential_development_policy.aspx)

West Lancashire Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA):

[http://www.westlancs.gov.uk/planning/local\\_plan,ldf\\_plan\\_policy/latest\\_planning\\_policy\\_new/housing\\_land\\_studies.aspx](http://www.westlancs.gov.uk/planning/local_plan,ldf_plan_policy/latest_planning_policy_new/housing_land_studies.aspx)

Joint Employment Land and Premises Study (JELPS):

[http://www.westlancs.gov.uk/planning/local\\_plan,ldf\\_plan\\_policy/latest\\_planning\\_policy\\_new/employment\\_land\\_study.aspx](http://www.westlancs.gov.uk/planning/local_plan,ldf_plan_policy/latest_planning_policy_new/employment_land_study.aspx)

The North West Plan – Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West (2008):

<http://www.gos.gov.uk/gonw/Planning/RegionalPlanning/>

Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3):

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/pps3housing>

*(end)*