

WEST LANCASHIRE



LOCAL PLAN

**West Lancashire Borough Council
Local Plan 2012-2027**

Local Plan Preferred Options

Rural Proofing Report



1.0 The importance of rural proofing

1.1 Rural proofing is a mandatory part of the policy making process that involves the assessment of how policies will affect rural people and places, thereby ensuring that policies are implemented fairly and effectively. The benefits of rural proofing to good policy making are wide ranging and include:

- Better decision making;
- Improved communication;
- Strengthening relationships; and
- Building capacity

2.0 Definition of rural areas

2.1 Rural classification has been developed to provide a framework for statistical analysis and reporting and is used to assess the condition of, and monitor changes in, rural England and to generate evidence to inform the development of policies to meet the needs of rural communities.

2.2 An official definition of rural areas was introduced in 2004 following a review of the previous classification, which classed any area with a population of above 1,500 people as an urban area. The new classification is based on population density, and classes an urban area being that which has a population of 10,000 people or more. Rural places are therefore areas with fewer than 10,000 people and include those settlements previously described as urban areas with a population of between 1,500 and 10,000 inhabitants. However, the definition of 'rurality' reaches much further down the settlement hierarchy to small villages, hamlets and isolated dwellings and further analysis based on residential densities is then used to classify settlement types. Settlement types are then linked to Output Areas and Wards.

2.3 The new definition identifies each Output Area in England and Wales as one of 8 different area types, comprising settlement type and context, as shown below:

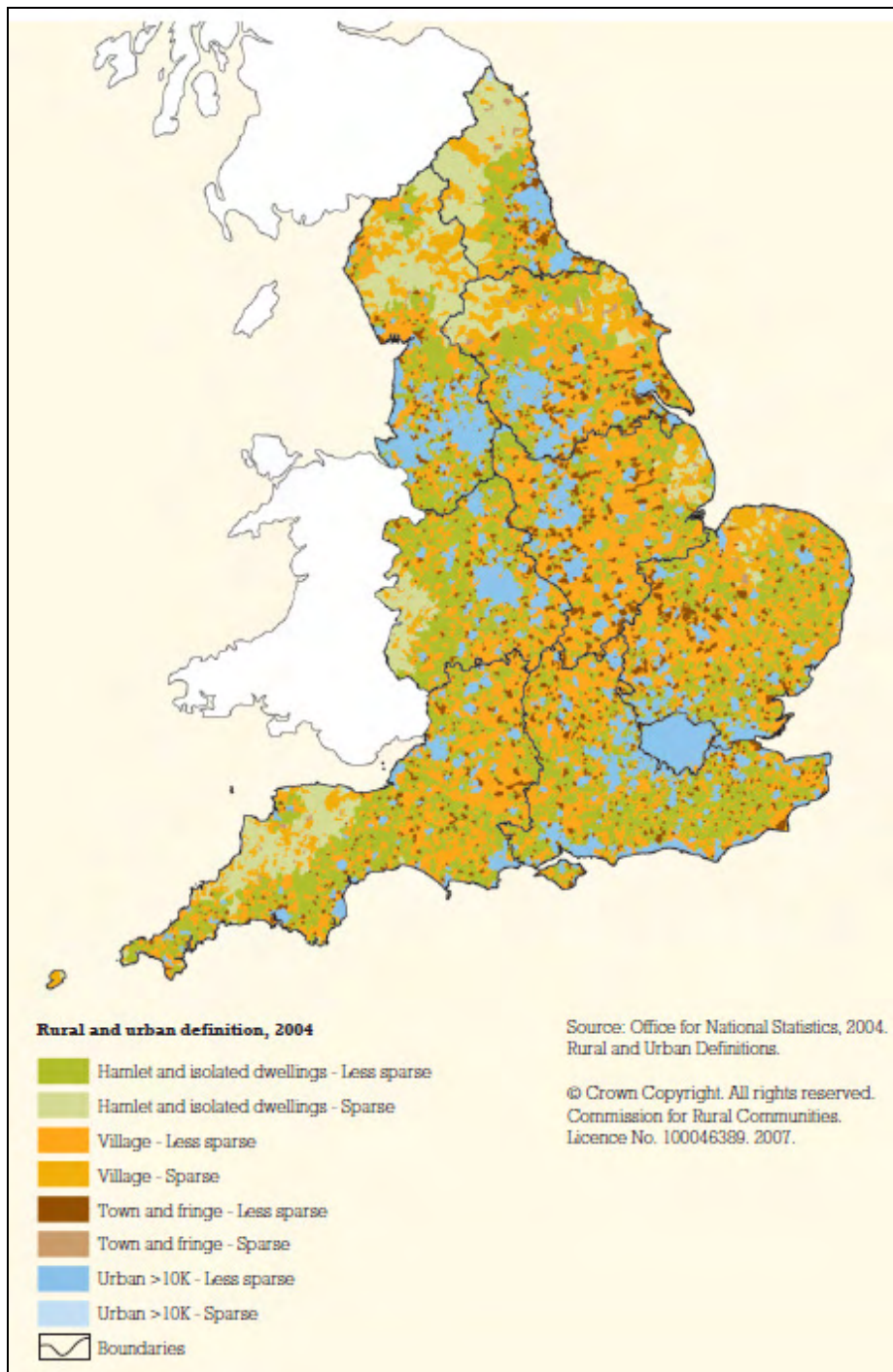
Settlement Type	Context
Urban > 10K	Less sparse
Town and Fringe	Less sparse
Village	Less sparse
Hamlet & Isolated dwellings	Less sparse
Urban > 10K	Sparse
Town and Fringe	Sparse
Village	Sparse
Hamlet & Isolated dwellings	Sparse

Source: *Defining Rural England, Commission for Rural Communities, 2004*

2.4 Those categories highlighted in green are rural, whilst those in grey are urban. Defined areas with a resident population of more than 10,000 people (at the time of the 2001 Census) were classed as urban. Each area was then categorised as less sparse or sparse based on the household density of a larger area surrounding the smaller area.

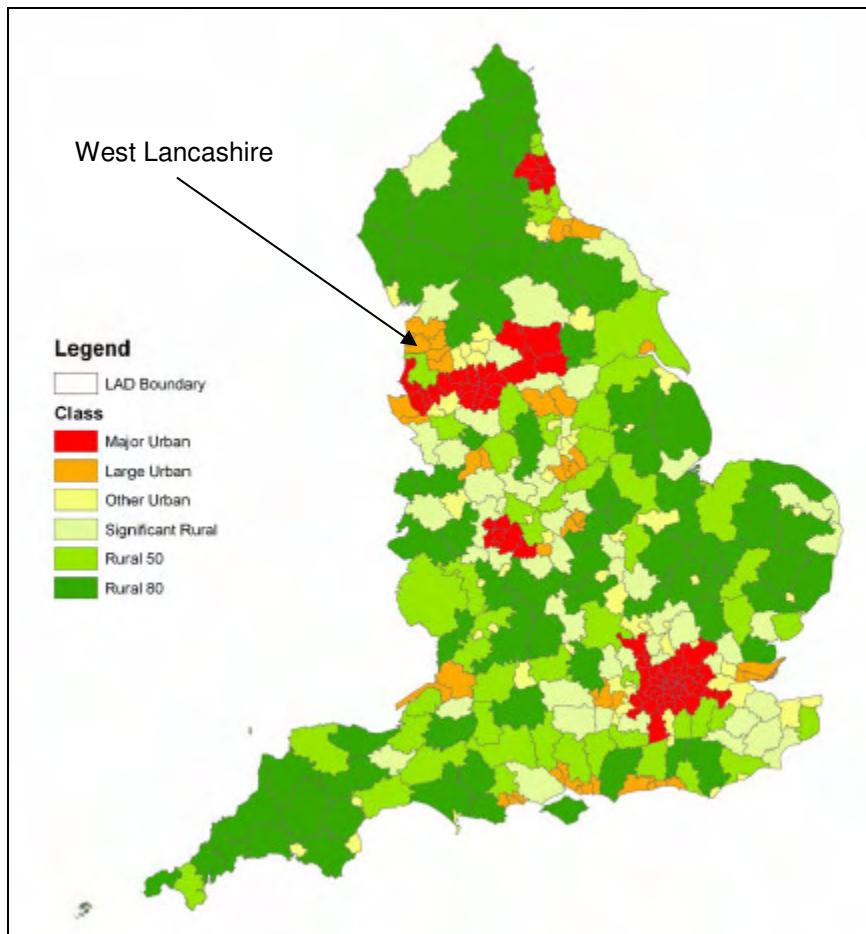
A full explanation of how rural areas have been defined can be found in RERC's [methodology paper](#).

Chart 1.1 Rural and urban designations, 2004



Source: *Defining Rural England*, Commission for Rural Communities, 2004

Chart 1.2 Rural Classification, Local Authority Districts (LAD) 2005



Source: A Technical Guide, 2005, RERC

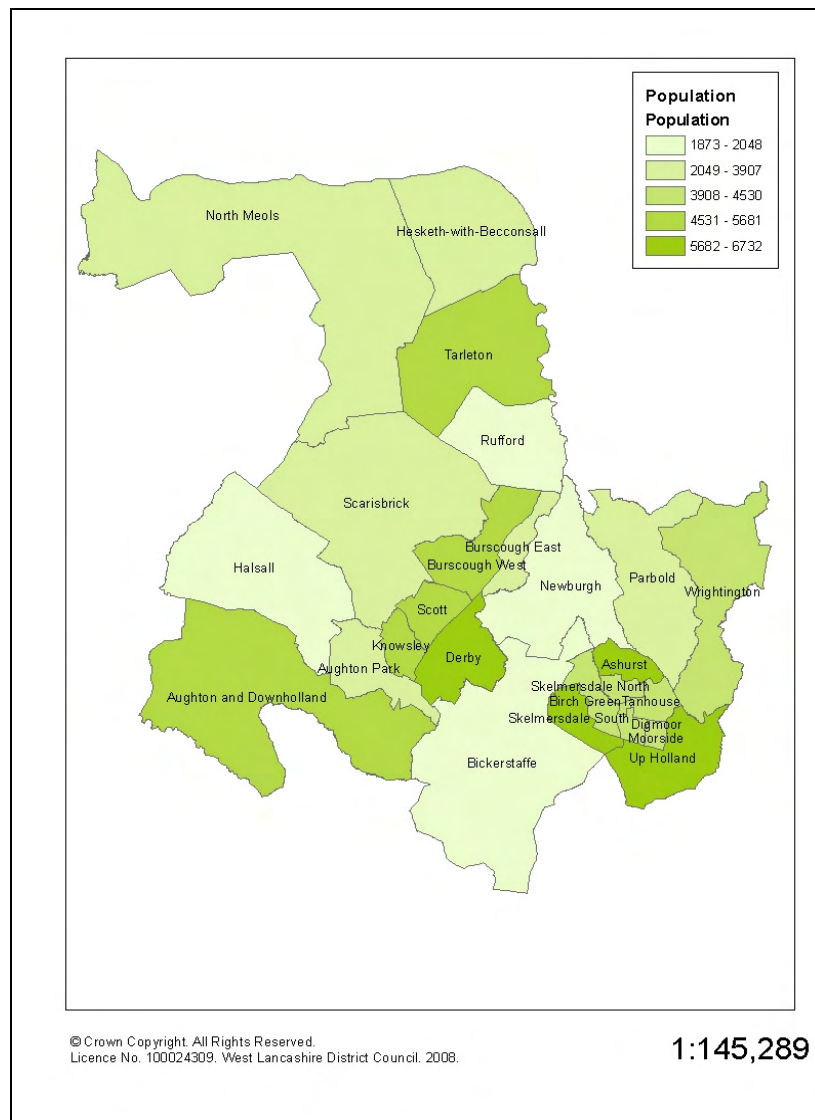
- 2.5 As a Local Authority District (LAD), West Lancashire is designated as a predominately rural Borough and is classed within the rural 50 – meaning that over 50% but less than 80% of the population live in villages and dispersed settlements (rural areas).

3.0 Evidence - Rural areas in West Lancashire

- 3.1 Within West Lancashire, the only settlements with a population above 10,000, and thereby designated as urban, are Ormskirk (including Aughton) and Skelmersdale (including Up Holland). All others are designated rural.
- 3.2 In order to recognise the likely effects that policy will have upon rural areas, it is necessary to first understand the current position. This is illustrated through the following evidence base. More detailed analysis can be found through the [Local Plan Evidence Papers](#).

Demographics

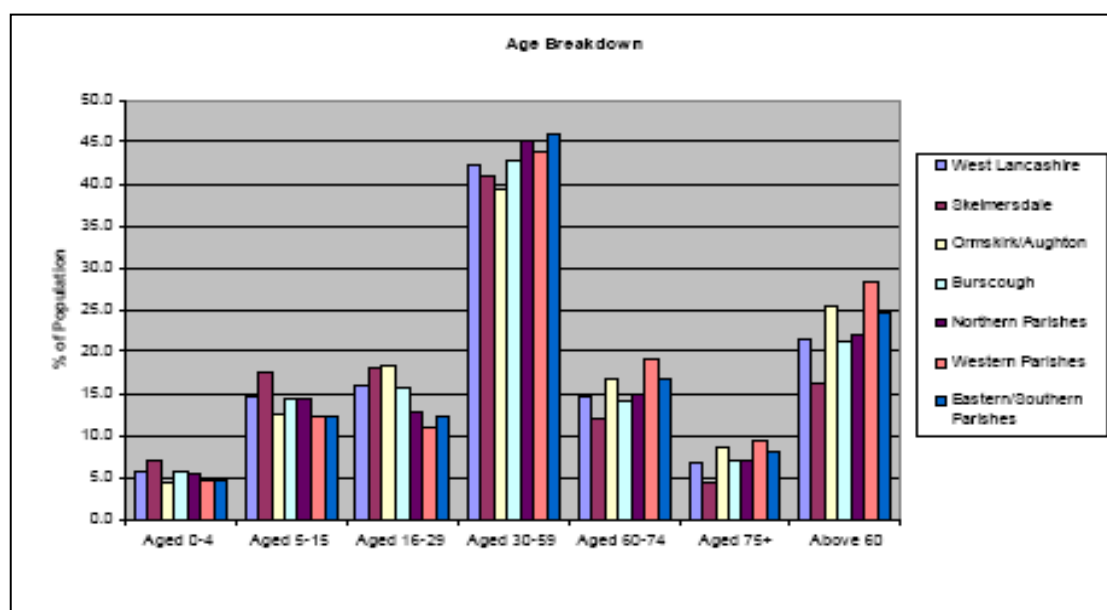
Chart 1.3 Distribution of population in West Lancashire



Source: WLBC Spatial Atlas 2009 (2001 Census, ONS)

- 3.3 The highest concentrations of people are found in the urban areas of Skelmersdale (including Up Holland) and Ormskirk (including Aughton) which are the only areas of West Lancashire to have a population of more than 10,000. At the 2001 census, Ormskirk had a resident population of 17,234 and Skelmersdale had 40,482. The total population of West Lancashire in 2001 was 108,378.

Chart 1.4 Population age breakdown by area within West Lancashire 2001



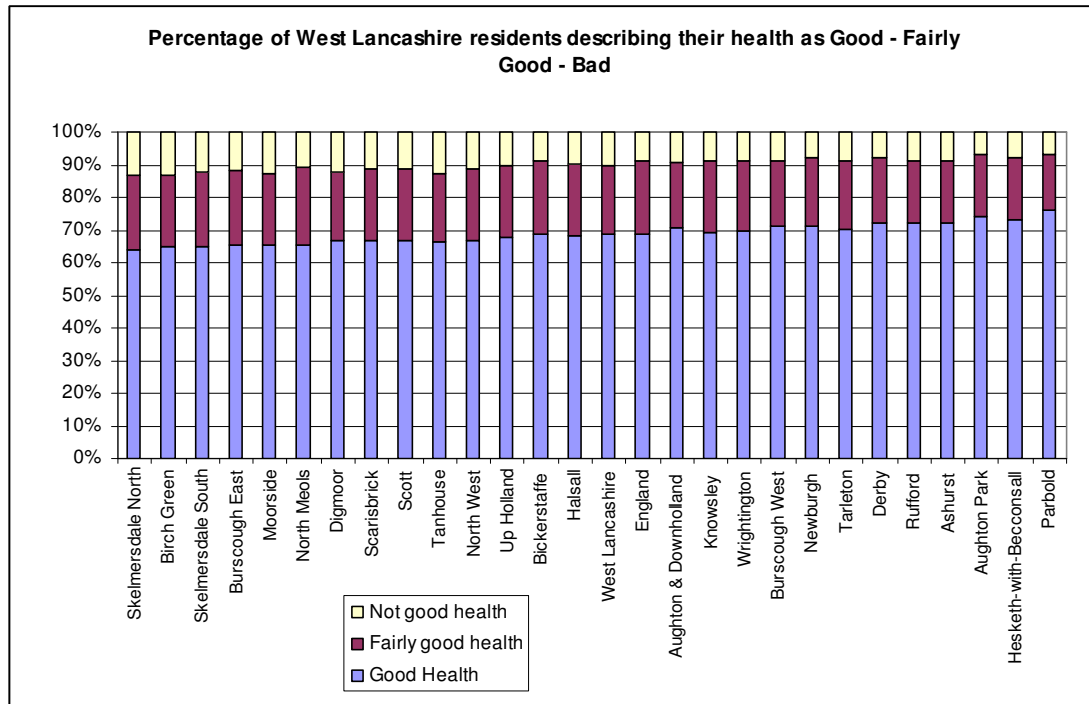
Source: WLBC Spatial Atlas 2009 (2001 Census, ONS)

- 3.4 There is some variation between settlement areas and the ages of its residents. The rural areas of West Lancashire are more attractive to people of middle or retirement age whilst Skelmersdale has a younger, more varied population structure.
- 3.5 The Borough population is projected to increase to 116,000 by 2033 - a 5% increase on its level in 2008 – equating to an additional 5,600 residents. The main change forecast to the age structure is an increase in the proportion of residents aged over 60 and a decrease of those aged 15-59. Inevitably, this will have an impact on the working population and the delivery of services. The highest increase predicted is to the age category 75+ at over double its 2008 rate. This is much higher than the county and regional change expected.
- 3.6 Given that rural areas appear to attract people of a higher age, and that the proportion of the population who are aged is set to significantly increase, this could place additional pressures and demand on services within rural areas.

Health

- 3.7 In the 2001 Census, 69% of West Lancashire residents described their health as good, 21% rated it fairly good and 10% rated it not good. This broadly matches the North West and England rates.
- 3.8 On the whole, residents from the rural wards rated their health more positively than those people living in Skelmersdale wards. The best levels of health were reported in Parbold and Hesketh with Becconsall.

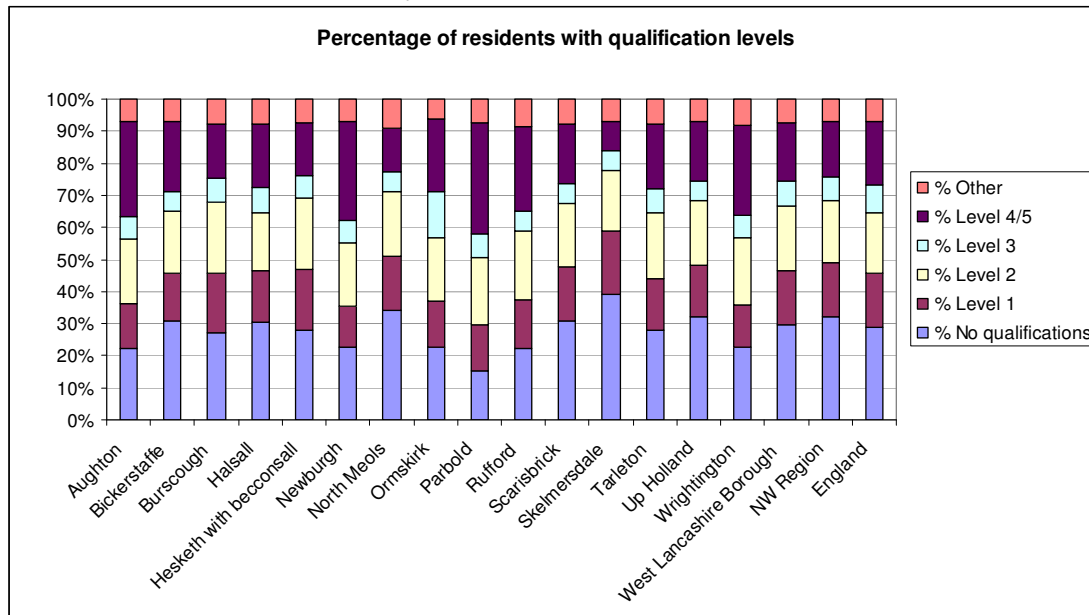
Chart 1.5 West Lancashire resident's description of health



Source: WLBC 2010 (2001 Census, ONS)

Education and skills

Chart 1.6 Educational Achievement by West Lancashire wards 2001



Source: WLBC Spatial Atlas 2009 (2001 Census, ONS)

3.9 18% of West Lancashire's workforce has a degree (or equivalent) or higher. This compares to a regional figure of 17% and a national figures of 20%, placing it roughly on par with its counterparts. The highest proportion of people with Level 4 qualifications (degree level) or higher are found at Aughton, Parbold, Newburgh and Wrightington – these are largely rural area, dormer settlements used predominately by commuters to other areas.

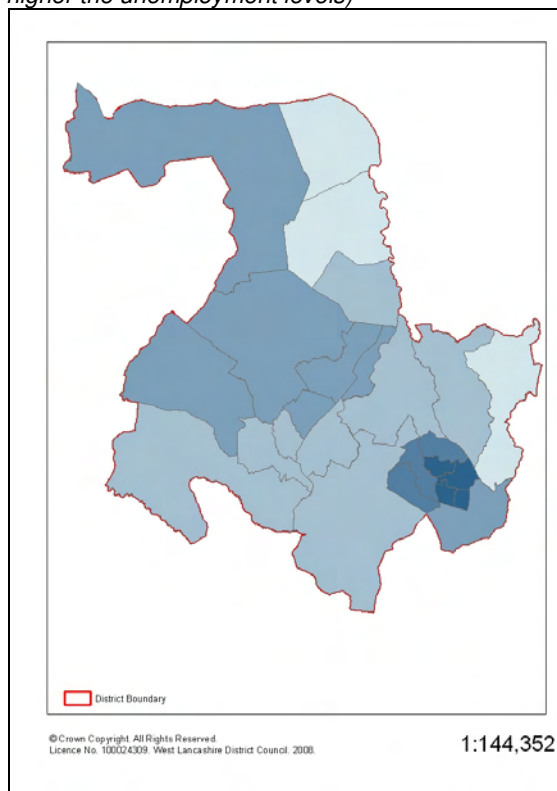
Deprivation

- 3.10 The Indices of Multiple Deprivation are made up from seven indicators (income, employment, health & disability, education, skills & training, housing and access to services). Varying levels of deprivation are found across the Borough. Skelmersdale is by far the most deprived area with many of the rural areas such as Parbold and Hesketh Bank having low levels of deprivation. Within each of the individual indicators, more variances can be seen.
- 3.11 Income deprivation is high within North Meols which is predominately an agricultural / horticultural business area, with further moderate levels stretching across the western band of rural areas where similar employment is located. Health deprivation is highest in Skelmersdale, followed by pockets in the northern rural areas where access to health care is more difficult due to their remote nature and relative inaccessibility of GP's and Hospitals. Education deprivation levels are highest in Skelmersdale, followed again by pockets in the north within Tarleton, Hesketh Bank and North Meols. Living environment deprivation is worst in the rural areas of Bickerstaffe, Aughton & Downholland, Scarisbrick and Tarleton. The rural areas also perform badly in relation to housing and service deprivation where affordability is poor and services are more difficult to access due to the isolated nature of the rural areas.
- 3.12 The rural areas perform comparably well in relation to crime.

Economy and Employment

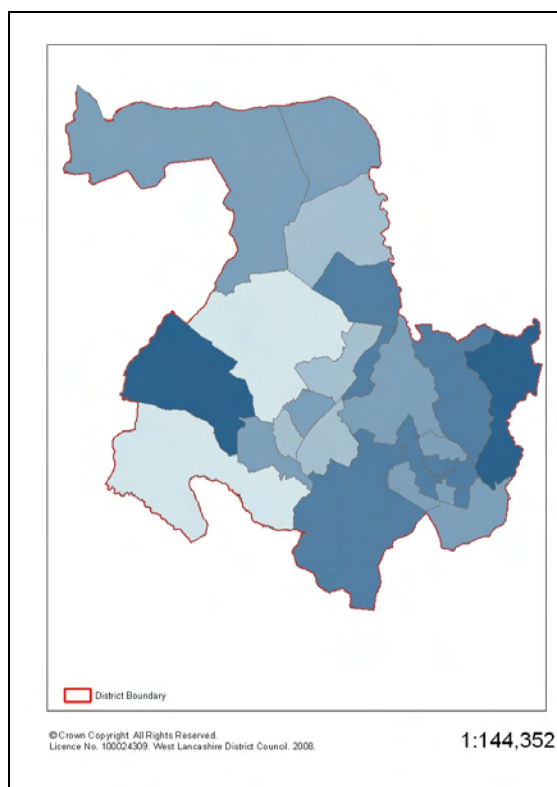
- 3.13 Rates of unemployment vary across the Borough, being highest in Skelmersdale with an average rate of 10.6% in 2001. The lowest unemployment levels are in the rural areas, particularly Hesketh-with-Becconsall and Tarleton (2.1% and 2.6% respectively).

Chart 1.7 Rates of unemployment in West Lancashire (2001)
(The darker the area, the higher the unemployment levels)



Source: WLBC 2010 (ONS 2001)

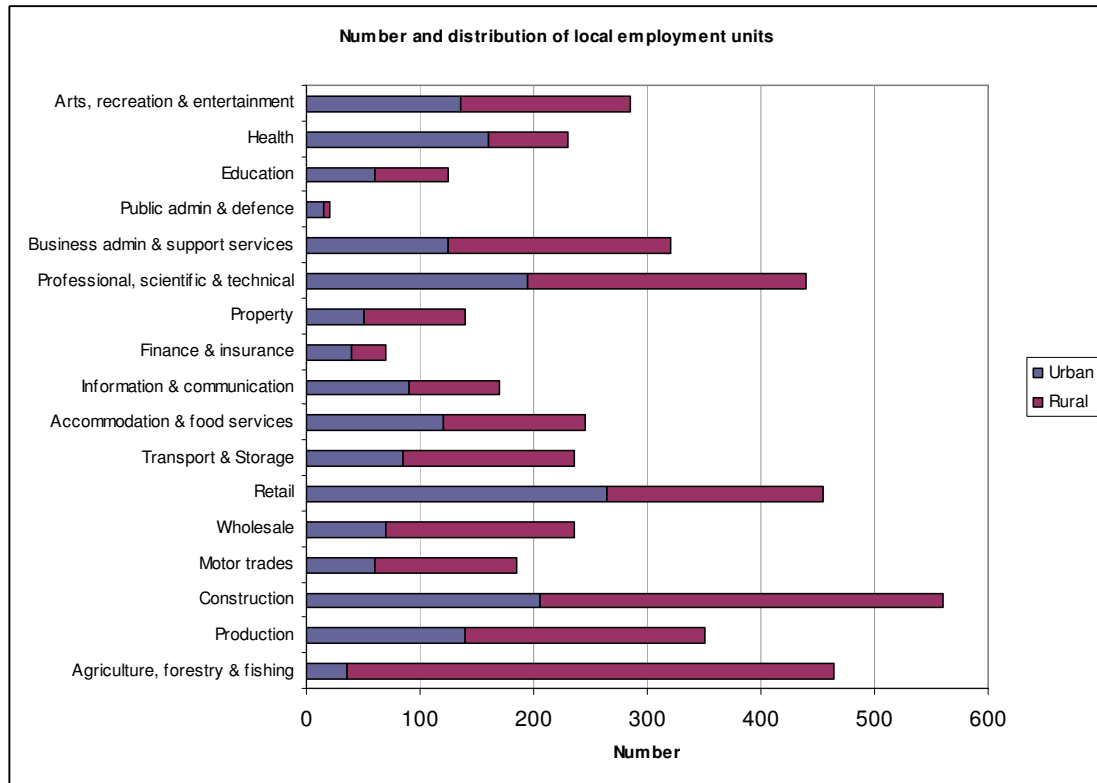
Chart 1.8 JSA Claimants over 12 months 2010 in West Lancashire
(The darker the area, the more JSA claimants)



Source: WLBC 2010 (NOMIS 2010)

- 3.14 The number of JSA claimants in West Lancashire is level with the national rate, although falls just beneath the regional rate. More men claim JSA than women in the Borough. The greatest number of JSA claimants have, traditionally, been found in Skelmersdale, particularly in the wards of Digmoor, Birch Green and Tanhouse that have high deprivation levels. However, the effects of the recession have altered the trends. In April 2010, the largest concentrations of people claiming JSA for 12 months or longer are found in the rural areas of Wrightington and Halsall. The least affected areas are Scarisbrick and Aughton and Downholland.

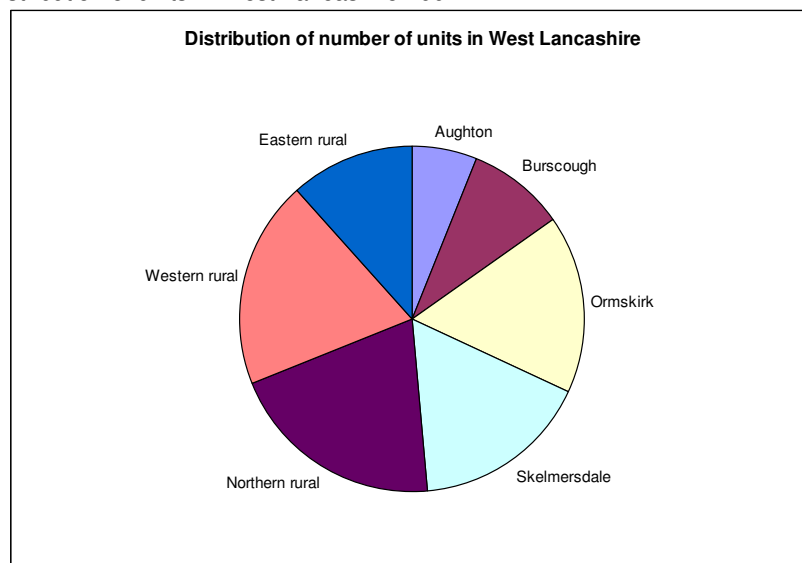
Chart 1.9 Number and distribution of local employment units in West Lancashire



Source: WLBC 2010 (ONS 2009)

- 3.15 In 2009, the largest number of employment units in the Borough were in relation to the construction trade, followed by agriculture, retail and professional, scientific and technical. Of all the settlements, Skelmersdale has the largest number of employment businesses with 575 units, followed by Ormskirk with 570 units.
- 3.16 The rural areas comprise almost half the total numbers, although are generally comprised of businesses with few employees unlike those found in the urban areas. Unsurprisingly, agriculture has the highest number of rural business units, followed by construction and professional services.

Chart 1.10 Distribution of units in West Lancashire 2001

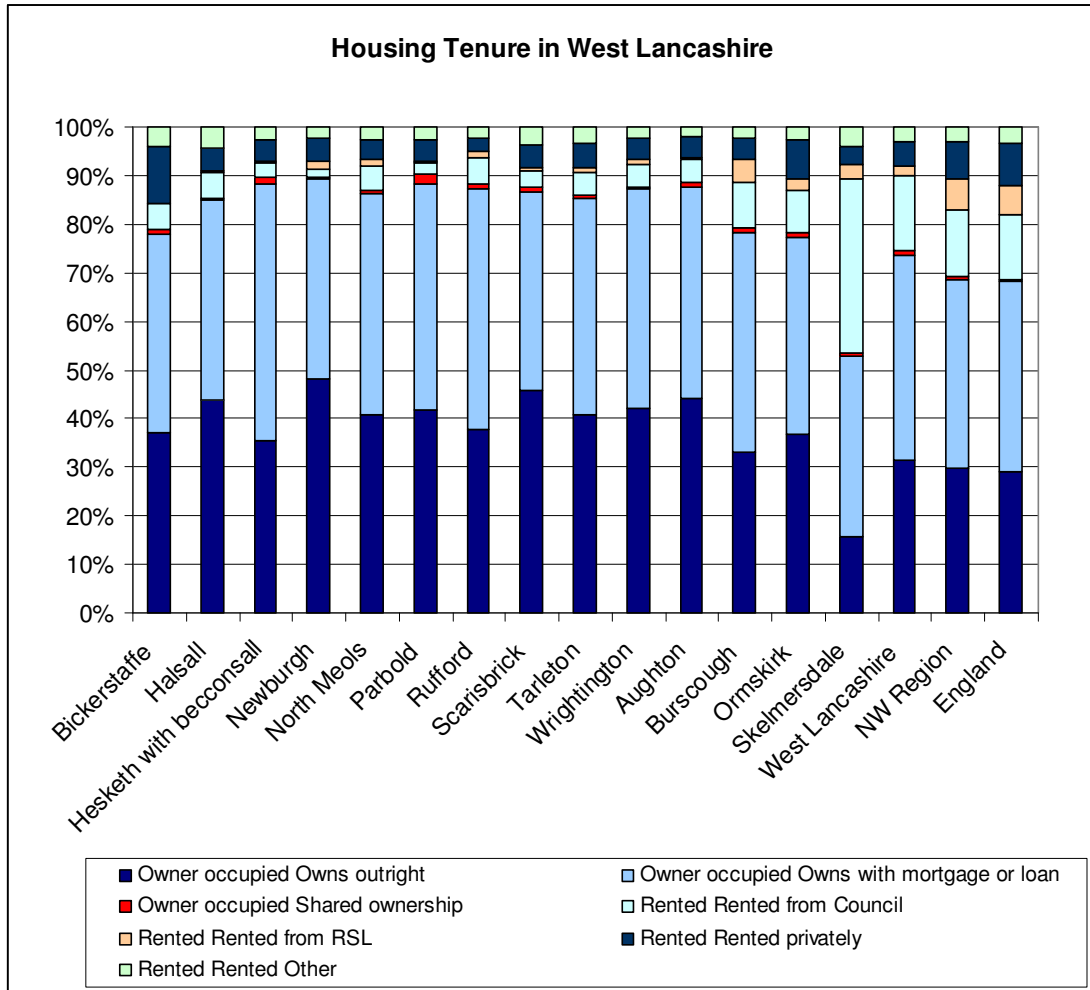


Source: WLBC 2010 (ONS 2001 Census)

- 3.17 The Rural Economy Study for West Lancashire confirmed the entrepreneurial emphasis of the rural areas – over half the boroughs companies, 40% of the jobs and a higher businesses start up date that the borough as a whole. The business birth rate in rural West Lancashire is higher than in the Borough as a whole, Lancashire and the North West.
- 3.18 The northern parishes have a major food cluster based around horticulture, supporting businesses and employment. The nature of this business faces major threats from supermarket prices, labour market stability and long-term consumer trends (eg the rise in organic food, the need to reduce air miles) and needs to be protected. Other clusters exist in engineering and construction products manufacturing. These sectors are particularly concerned about improving the quality and quantity of candidates for jobs and what they perceive as poor public transport provision in the borough.
- 3.19 A tourism infrastructure is present in the borough although is weak, but the industry as an economic driver will only ever have a limited impact in West Lancashire. Whilst there is the potential to maintain and enhance existing assets, tourism should not and cannot be a top priority for West Lancashire.
- 3.20 West Lancashire is over-reliant on external locations to supply its employees, particularly in the manufacturing and transport and communications sectors. Work needs to be undertaken to better connect its under-engaged labour market in Skelmersdale to meet employment needs in the rural areas.
- 3.21 Skills and labour supply are a major challenge for rural businesses, firstly securing the right number and type of candidates, secondly securing young people with the right attitudes and thirdly, finding graduates to work in rural locations. Transport is the other main challenge, with poor quality roads and, more importantly, poor public transport links.
- 3.22 The final challenge the study identified was planning restrictions due to its extensive green belt policy. There is a need for rural business space, with a lack of proper start-up or move-on business space. In this respect the study recommended funding to help finance the conversion of disused agricultural buildings into employment space, the consideration of live/work space and of a business development centre.
- 3.23 Opportunities are present to diversify rural employment opportunities, including production of biomass and pharmaceutical crops, attracting food investment and create a European style food 'appellation'. Further opportunities include improving public transport and skills and employment.

Housing

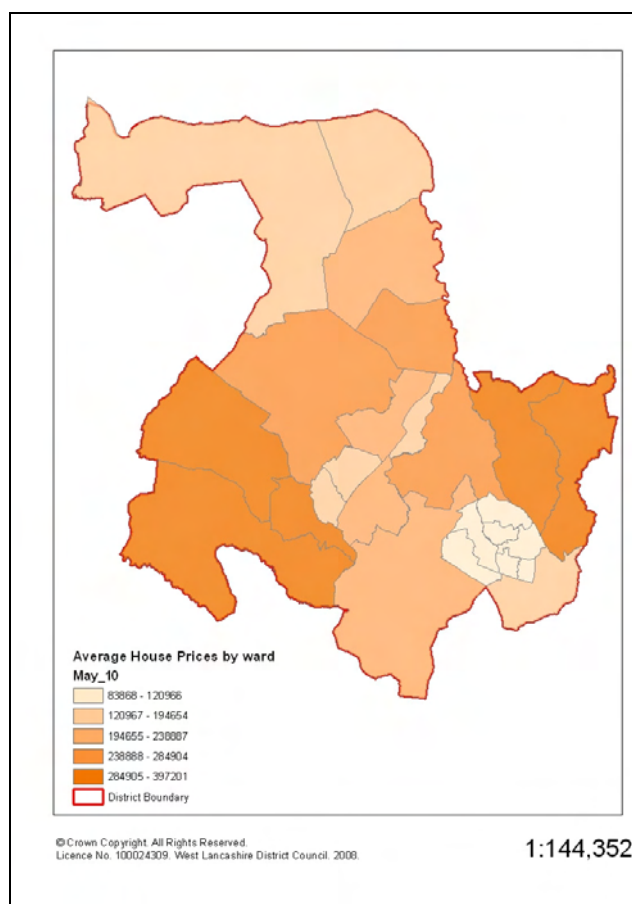
Chart 1.11 Housing Tenure in West Lancashire



Source: WLBC 2010 (ONS 2001)

- 3.24 7.8% of the housing stock is located in Burscough, 14% in the Northern parishes, 10% in the Western parishes and 11% in the Eastern parishes. The remainder of the stock is located in the urban areas of Skelmersdale, Ormskirk and Aughton.
- 3.25 In West Lancashire, just over a quarter of all homes (26%) are rented, whilst 74% are owner occupied. 42% own homes with a mortgage and 31% own them outright - both of these figures are slightly above regional and national figures. Shared ownership comprises just 1% of the tenure, placing it level with the regional and national figures. There is considerable variation between different parts of the Borough and areas are characterised by the type of tenure that predominates. The rural areas (Newburgh, Scarisbrick, Parbold) tend to have the most homes owned outright.
- 3.26 Few terraced houses are found in the rural areas of the Borough, when compared to that found in the high-density urban areas of the Borough. The highest proportions of detached home are found in Aughton Park, Newburgh, Parbold, Rufford and Wrightington, followed by the northern parishes.

Chart 1.12 Housing affordability across West Lancashire



Source: WLBC 2010 (Hometrack)

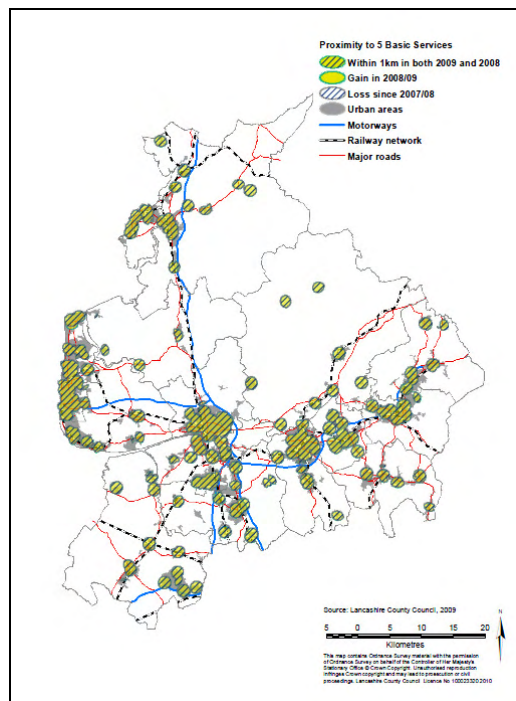
- 3.27 The average house price in 2009 in West Lancashire stood at £170,633. This is an increase of 85% on the 2001 average house price, although prices have fallen on average since 2007 as a result of the economic market and recession. The highest house prices are found in the rural areas of Rufford, Aughton Park, Newburgh and Parbold and reflect the desirability and location of the areas. The cheapest houses are located in Skelmersdale.
- 3.28 The ratio of house prices to income in West Lancashire has increased each year and the average property price is now almost 7 times the average income, which is higher than the regional average, and similar to the national average. House prices in the south-western parishes and Rufford are most disproportionate to income.
- 3.29 The West Lancashire Housing Market Assessment recommended that almost all new housing in the rural parishes should be affordable. However, it was recognised that in practice, some affordable needs arising in these areas may have to be met in Skelmersdale.
- 3.30 The Housing Need and Demand study analysed housing need and demand in West Lancashire by assessing both the current situation and the nature of housing required in the future. Figures were provided at Parish level, distinguishing between urban and rural areas of the Borough. The study found that more than half of older person households in need live in the rural areas. Furthermore, 5.8% of households in the rural parishes of West Lancashire indicated that a member of their family had to move out of the parish to find a suitable home. Lathom and Halsall most commonly recorded this as a problem. Within West Lancashire there is a threefold division between Skelmersdale, Ormskirk/Burscough and the rural parishes. The rural areas

have generally high values and high incomes, with 2 exceptions: retired people and newly forming households.

Transport, Services and Infrastructure

- 3.31 West Lancashire has a higher proportion of residents driving a car to commute to work than the regional and national averages. Although the main settlements are reasonably well-served by public transport, the rural areas have a lack of services. 16% of the working population use public transport (bus, train, cycle or on foot) to travel to work. Given the large agricultural base in the Borough, 10% of residents work from home, compared to 8% in the North West and 9% in England.
- 3.32 The highest users of cars are in the commuting settlements adjacent to the M6 corridor, such as Parbold and Wroughtington whilst the lowest users are in Skelmersdale, though it should be borne in mind that fewer people in Skelmersdale actually own cars. The highest train users are those residents based along the rail lines – in Aughton and Ormskirk - whilst bike and foot methods are used the most by residents of Ormskirk, Skelmersdale and Burscough where a range of employment opportunities exist in those areas thereby reducing the need to commute long distances.
- 3.33 There are two significant gaps in the local strategic highway network; the need to ease traffic congestion through Ormskirk along the A570 and the issue of HGVs using rural roads to access horticultural producers and the need for them to travel through Tarleton and Hesketh Bank. Bus services enabling access to the rural areas and in Skelmersdale (particularly for employment) are poor/non-existent.
- 3.34 In 2008/09, 57% of West Lancashire's residents had access to 5 basic services (GP, primary school, post office, food shop, bus stop) within 1km. However, this was a 7% decrease on the number proportion in 2003/04. The average percentage for Lancashire is 68.8% so West Lancashire falls behind the average, largely because its rural nature means that services are less accessible.

Chart 1.13 Areas within 1km of 5 basic services



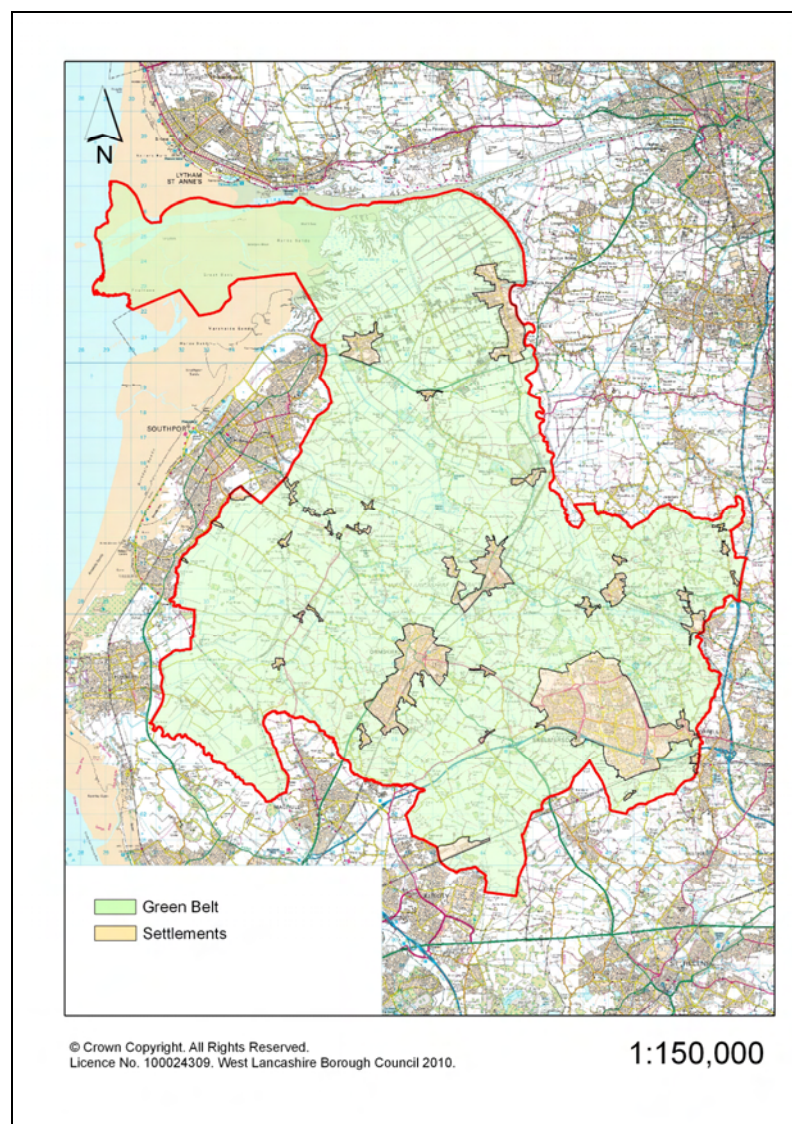
Source: Lancashire County Council (AMR2) 2010

- 3.35 The rural areas have poor accessibility to basic services as there are fewer people, or more sparsely located, to utilise and financially support services.
- 3.36 Rural areas have fewer bus services, poor or infrequent rail accessibility and a low provision of public open spaces including sports facilities, playing pitches and play areas.

Environment

- 3.37 West Lancashire has 34,630 hectares of Green Belt land, comprising 91% of its total land area. Of all the local authorities in England, West Lancashire has the largest area of Green Belt.

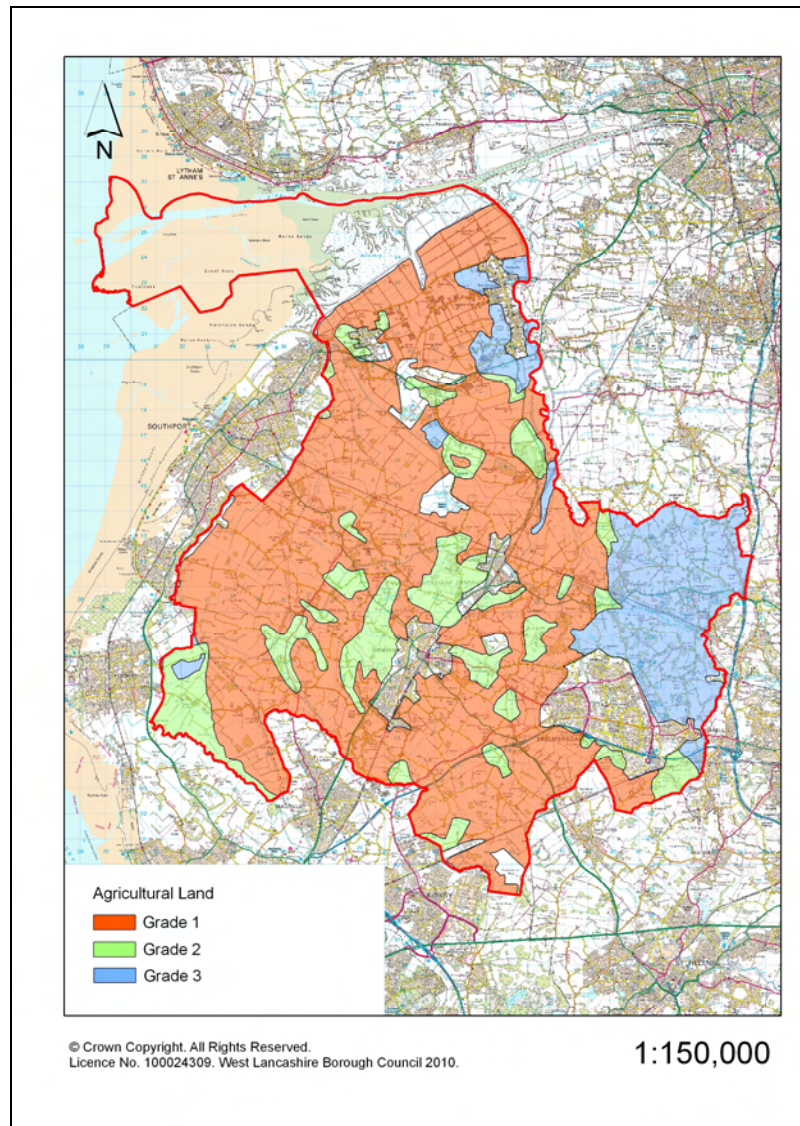
Chart 1.14 Green Belt in West Lancashire



Source: WLBC 2010

- 3.38 West Lancashire has a high proportion of good quality agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 and 3) that should be protected where possible. 59% of West Lancashire's land is classified as Grade 1; a higher proportion than that of the Lancashire authorities, Lancashire, the North West and England.

Chart 1.15 Agricultural land grades 1,2 and 3 in West Lancashire



Source: WLBC 2010

- 3.39 73% of the land in West Lancashire is used for agriculture (24,590 hectares), largely for the cereals, general cropping and horticulture sectors. 2,764 people are employed in agriculture in the rural areas in West Lancashire, which is higher than all the other Lancashire authorities and illustrates that agricultural and horticultural businesses are an important asset to the local economy and employment, particularly in the rural areas.
- 3.40 The rural areas contain a number of conservation areas, listed buildings, monuments and sites that need to be protected and conserved. They are also important in providing a large amount of green infrastructure and forming the West Lancashire landscape.
- 3.41 Significant areas of land are potentially under threat from coastal and fluvial flooding. The highest areas of risk from coastal flooding are in the rural areas in the north and west of the Borough, most notably in Banks. Further threats affect Hesketh Bank and Appley Bridge.

3.42 Key Issues for the rural areas

- To increase affordable housing and provide specialised accommodation
- To narrow gaps in deprivation levels
- Development of technology hubs and rural workspace
- Improvement of broadband
- To make the most of the agricultural industry
- To diversify rural employment opportunities and support rural businesses
- To improve public transport accessibility
- To improve service accessibility
- To improve the quality and quantity of open spaces

4.0 West Lancashire Local Plan

4.1 Each of the policies presented through the Local Plan Preferred Options will be discussed in the following section in relation to the impacts they are likely to have on the rural areas. This will include how the policy will affect the availability of services, any reliance on partnerships, institutions or infrastructure for delivery. It will discuss the objectives of each proposed policy and its intended outcomes or impacts as well who is likely to benefit.

Policy:	SP1: A sustainable development framework for West Lancashire
Objectives:	To ensure development in West Lancashire continues to create sustainable communities. Development should be sustainable in its construction, its use of resources, location and accessibility.
Proposed outcome:	That the 3 main settlements of the Borough will take the majority of development, with Skelmersdale a particular focus. Development in rural areas will be restricted to the key/rural sustainable villages, with exceptions for like-for-like development or reuse of buildings and minor infill development. Where a specific need for development for a rural use is identified that retains or enhances the rural character of the area, new built development may be permitted.
Beneficiaries:	Sustainable development will help create sustainable communities and help to reinforce the distinction between urban and rural areas and the character of areas. Improvements to transport in the rural areas should improve access to services and facilities, benefiting those living in smaller rural areas and strengthening the position and growth of the larger urban areas.
Comments:	It is not sustainable to enable too much development within the rural areas, and there is not the number, or density, of residents to support the provision or expansion of local services in those areas. There is insufficient infrastructure to cope with demand in many of the rural areas and this could not be changed without extensive cost. External infrastructure providers would be unlikely to afford this cost and developers would be unwilling to pick up the expense as it would make many of their developments unviable. However, policy SP1 should help to improve public transport services and the accessibility of services within the immediate area and in outlying areas. It will still enable some development to be delivered in the rural areas, related to need, but will locate the most development in the most sustainable urban areas of the Borough.

Policy:	SP2: Skelmersdale Town Centre
Objectives:	To locate the most development in Skelmersdale and regenerate the town and improve its social and economic position. To make Skelmersdale a leisure, recreation and retail centre of excellence within the North West and improve employment and housing opportunities and availability.
Proposed outcome:	To reduce deprivation; to improve health and education and skills; to improve the economy, night time economy and retail; to build new housing and improve the quality of existing housing; to improve leisure and recreation facilities.
Beneficiaries:	Primarily, Skelmersdale and its residents will benefit from improvements and regeneration. Secondly, the outlying areas both within and outside of West Lancashire will benefit as a result of more services and facilities, improved economy, more employment and training opportunities and increased housing levels.
Comments:	Will require partnership working with St Modwen and the HCA. The policy will help to improve the availability of public and private services and of transport to and from Skelmersdale which will indirectly benefit the rural areas.

Policy:	SP3: Burscough Yew Tree Farm
Objectives:	To support the growth of Burscough for employment, housing and leisure. To improve infrastructure, services and facilities. To provide a decentralised renewable energy facility.
Proposed outcome:	To provide new residential development, employment, a park, services and facilities, renewable energy facility, road network, traffic mitigation, drainage and rail improvements and financial contributions.
Beneficiaries:	Primarily, Burscough and its residents will benefit from the growth of Burscough. Secondly, the outlying areas both within and outside of West Lancashire will benefit as a result of more, and improved, services and facilities; improved infrastructure, stronger economy, more employment and training opportunities and increased housing levels.
Comments:	<p>This will require the release of some Green Belt land around Burscough and some agricultural land which would have some environmental impact. However, it is felt that the quality of development and the exceptional circumstances justifies the release. Locating development in smaller parcels of green belt around the settlement would create an incremental movement of development. The policy will help to improve the availability of public and private services, infrastructure and transport to and from Burscough which will indirectly benefit the rural areas.</p> <p>A capacity shortage at New Lane waste water treatment works will have an impact on development in Ormskirk and Burscough and Rufford and Scarisbrick so is a key issue that needs addressing for those rural areas.</p>

Policy:	GN1: Settlement boundaries
Objectives:	To encourage development within settlement boundaries, particularly on brownfield land, and to restrict development on Green Belt or Protected land.
Proposed outcome:	To support development in the most sustainable areas. To permit small scale affordable housing or rural employment or community facilities to meet an identified local need on Protected land.
Beneficiaries:	Locating development in the most sustainable areas will help create sustainable communities and help to reinforce the distinction between urban and rural areas and protect the character of areas. It will also serve to protect Green Belt, agricultural land and the environment, benefitting the rural economies, open space accessibility and tourism.
Comments:	This policy will help to protect the character and landscape of rural areas, whilst protecting the Green Belt, agricultural land and environment.

Policy:	GN2: Safeguarded land
Objectives:	To remove some land from the Green Belt and allocate it as 'Safeguarded land', so that the land will be protected from development, except where it is required for development under 'Plan B' in order to meet delivery targets.
Proposed outcome:	To protect the Safeguarded land from development, unless required under the needs of 'Plan B'.
Beneficiaries:	The policy will protect areas from development, ensuring that only the most suitable areas and amounts of land are released for development as and when required.
Comments:	This policy will help to protect the character and landscape of the Borough, including rural areas.

Policy:	GN3: Design of development
Objectives:	To promote development of a high quality design.
Proposed outcome:	To ensure developments are of a high quality, with acknowledgement as to how design can help improve energy and waste, accessibility and transport, drainage and sewerage, landscaping, biodiversity, the environment and to reduce crime.
Beneficiaries:	Ensuring design is of a high quality will contribute positively to the Boroughs distinctive character, with full regard to the local context within which it sits. It should also serve to help deal with wider issues such as accessibility and crime.
Comments:	This policy will encourage good design in all local areas, maintaining local character and improving related issues such as accessibility.

Policy:	GN4: Demonstrating viability
Objectives:	To require applicants proposing the redevelopment of a site, for alternative uses not directly in accordance with other Local Plan Policies, to submit a Viability Statement.
Proposed outcome:	The statement should provide proof of marketing and demonstrate there is no realistic prospect of retaining or reusing the site in its current use.
Beneficiaries:	This policy will help protect sites from a change of use, except in those cases where it can be demonstrated that to maintain the former use is no longer viable. This will protect areas from the loss of valuable housing, employment, leisure or environmental sites.
Comments:	Maintaining the current use of sites and protecting sites from unviable development is particularly important in rural areas, where there are fewer housing and employment opportunities. Where the current use can be demonstrated as no longer being viable, this policy will also support its change to another use, more relevant and important to a local rural community, such as the provision of affordable housing.

Policy:	GN5: Sequential tests
Objectives:	To ensure that sequential tests are undertaken for uses in relation to retail and town centre uses, affordable housing, gypsy sites and out-of-centre office developments.
Proposed outcome:	That development will be located on the most appropriate and realistic sites.
Beneficiaries:	This policy will help protect areas from development, ensuring only the most appropriate and realistic sites are used.
Comments:	This policy should ensure that local areas are protected from unsuitable development, or that which can be accommodated in more sustainable locations, thereby protecting rural areas from excessive or unnecessary development.

Policy:	EC1: The Economy & Employment land
Objectives:	To deliver sustainable employment development in West Lancashire, by delivering land, prioritising redevelopment and regeneration opportunities in existing areas, releasing more land for development around the main settlements and expanding the employment sectors.
Proposed outcome:	To improve skills and training, to improve and diversify employment opportunities and to improve the economy.
Beneficiaries:	This policy will encourage development to help improve the economy and employment opportunities within West Lancashire, benefitting the local areas, the Borough as a whole, and the wider geographical area such as Lancashire and the North West.
Comments:	Development on Green Belt land will only be encouraged if it has been demonstrated that all other opportunities have been maximised. Most development will be focused in Skelmersdale, Ormskirk and Burscough. In exceptional circumstances, mixed use redevelopment of existing

	<p>employment sites may be permitted in rural areas where employment development alone is not proven to be viable or suitable. Employment development should encourage higher quality business premises and green construction and technology sectors.</p> <p>Locating the most development in the urban areas and away from the rural settlements will make development more sustainable. The rural economy is dealt with in EC2 and EC3.</p>
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Policy:	EC2: The rural economy
Objectives:	To support and protect the rural economy, to improve skills and labour supply, to improve transport and accessibility for businesses in the rural areas, to improve the weak tourism infrastructure, to protect agricultural land from development.
Proposed outcome:	To prevent the loss of employment sites in rural areas, to encourage new development that provides new investment and job opportunities in rural areas, to avoid the loss of agricultural land, to regenerate existing rural employment sites, to support rural businesses, to encourage the diversification of farms and the delivery of renewable and green energy projects and new tourism opportunities, to improve broadband provision.
Beneficiaries:	This policy will help improve the economy and employment opportunities within the rural areas of West Lancashire, primarily benefitting the local areas as well as the Borough as a whole, and the wider geographical area such as Lancashire and the North West. Encouraging training for rural employment will increase skills. The policy should work to improve the availability of (public) transport to access rural employment, thereby improving the accessibility of transport as a whole.
Comments:	It is important to recognise the importance of the rural economy in West Lancashire and to work to develop and preserve its sustainability. Improvements to some infrastructure may be required. Broadband expansion needs to be provided by working with partnership telecom agencies. Improving the rural economy will contribute to the sustainability of each area and to the Borough as a whole.

Policy:	EC3: Rural Development Opportunities
Objectives:	To permit the development of 4 significant brownfield sites in the rural areas for mixed use development.
Proposed outcome:	For development of those sites to stimulate the rural economy and provide much needed housing.
Beneficiaries:	The rural areas will benefit from employment opportunities, increases to the local economy, new housing, leisure or recreational uses, and improvements to essential services and infrastructure.
Comments:	This policy will ensure that sites will contribute to sustaining the rural economy whilst providing much needed jobs, housing and services. The flexibility and viability of schemes to ensure these functions can be delivered will need to be carefully balance. As sites are brownfield land, there should be few negative environmental impacts, although levels of traffic through the

	rural areas may increase as a result of development. Development of each site should consider methods to mitigate any detrimental effects.
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Policy:	EC4: Edge Hill University
Objectives:	To maximise the role of Edge Hill University in terms of employment opportunities, investment in the local area and up-skilling but to minimise impacts on Ormskirk and the wider environment.
Proposed outcome:	The expansion of Edge Hill University will provide more employment, investment and up-skilling. New student accommodation will be provided. It will also create links between the University and local business and the community sector and contribute to social inclusion and sports facilities.
Beneficiaries:	Primarily, the policy will benefit Edge Hill University. However, it will also have a positive social and economic impact on the local area and population.
Comments:	Some green belt release will be required to enable the expansion of Edge Hill, which will have some impact on the loss of agricultural land and the environment. However, this policy is likely to have a very minimal effect on the rural areas.

Policy:	RS1: Residential development
Objectives:	To provide a range of housing throughout the Borough in the most sustainable areas and meet housing targets. Housing should be prioritised on brownfield sites and adhere to standards for density.
Proposed outcome:	To deliver housing targets in the most sustainable areas. Housing will be prioritised on brownfield sites, adhere to density standards and lifetime homes standards and provide a range of housing.
Beneficiaries:	West Lancashire population, non-West Lancashire population
Comments:	The majority of housing should be located in the most sustainable settlements, i.e. the urban areas of the Borough, in accordance with Policy SP1. However, key and rural sustainable villages will be allowed small-scale residential development on Greenfield sites and development on brownfield sites. Smaller rural areas will be allowed 100% affordable housing schemes or specialist accommodation to meet local needs only. As such, residential development in rural areas will be allowed but will not contribute to any large growth of those areas as this would not be the most sustainable option. Residential development will aim to support the needs of local people, particularly in relation to affordable and specialised housing.

Policy:	RS2: Affordable & specialist housing
Objectives:	To require a proportion of new residential developments to provide affordable and specialist housing, with proportions dependent on the development size. To provide a range of affordable housing, including different tenures, types and sizes. To provide specialist housing for the elderly.

Proposed outcome:	That a range of affordable and specialist housing is provided.
Beneficiaries:	West Lancashire population, non-West Lancashire population. Particular groups such as elderly, special needs, families, single ownerships, new-forming households.
Comments:	Affordable housing is an issue throughout the Borough, including the rural areas. Needs vary through each of the areas and the Policy will work to address the localised rural needs for affordable and specialist housing.

Policy:	RS3: Provision of student accommodation
Objectives:	To support the construction of purpose built student accommodation and restrict the conversion of existing dwelling houses to HMOs.
Proposed outcome:	To provide student accommodation in line with need and demand. To have restricted the conversion of existing dwellings houses to HMOs.
Beneficiaries:	Residents of Ormskirk, students, Edge Hill University
Comments:	This policy is unlikely to have a positive or negative effect on the rural settlements and areas.

Policy:	RS4: Provision for gypsies & travellers and travelling showpeople
Objectives:	To provide a number of sites suitable for gypsies & travellers and travelling showpeople in several locations within the Borough.
Proposed outcome:	To have provided a number of sites suitable for gypsies & travellers and travelling showpeople in several locations within the Borough.
Beneficiaries:	Gypsies & travellers, travelling showpeople
Comments:	Broad locations for these sites are the M58 corridor and Scarisbrick for gypsies & travellers, and Burscough for travelling showpeople. These locations are where existing sites are already located and where these groups have expressed a desire to remain. As a result, there are unlikely to be significant new implications for rural areas.

Policy:	IF1: Maintaining vibrant town & local centres
Objectives:	To encourage retail and other appropriate development in town and local centres, in accordance with the town centre hierarchy of sustainability in the Borough.
Proposed outcome:	That retail and other appropriate development is encouraged in the town and local centres, improving the sustainability and economy of the Borough.
Beneficiaries:	West Lancashire Borough

Comments:	The town centres will accommodate the most retail development and out of town centre retail will be resisted. Large village centres such as Tarleton and Banks in the rural areas will accommodate some retail provision, however, few retail developments will be allowed in the rural small village centres and local centres. The policy seeks to protect and enhance the vitality and viability of the Borough's town, village and local centres. As rural areas are less sustainable and have fewer services for fewer residents, it is logical that the most retail development should be located in the larger urban areas.
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Policy:	IF2: Enhancing sustainable transport choice
Objectives:	To improve accessibility throughout the Borough, improve safety and quality of life for residents and reduce the Borough's carbon footprint.
Proposed outcome:	Improved transport services, better health, good environment, reduced emissions, reduced congestion, promotion of low carbon travel services, new rail station in Skelmersdale.
Beneficiaries:	West Lancashire residents, non West Lancashire residents
Comments:	The policy seeks to enhance and preserve existing infrastructure whilst looking to improve where provision is lacking – which is of particular importance in the rural areas of the Borough where provision is already infrequent and restricted services run. Improvements to transport should help to improve accessibility to services which encourages sustainability. Opportunities also exist to improve cycle and pedestrian provisions including in the linear parks in the northern parishes. Health should also be promoted by more active methods of transport and lower transport emissions.

Policy:	IF3: Service accessibility and Infrastructure for growth
Objectives:	To provide and deliver quality local services and infrastructure. Development will be directed toward settlements that have a good range of existing services and infrastructure before considering settlements areas where there are deficits requiring investment and improvements.
Proposed outcome:	To provide, improve and deliver local services and infrastructure in relation to the hierarchy of sustainable settlements.
Beneficiaries:	West Lancashire residents
Comments:	The rural nature of West Lancashire means that isolation to services can be common and is an important issue for the Local Plan to address. Development will be located foremost in the urban areas of the Borough which have the most sustainable settlements, however the rural areas should still benefit from improvements. This includes telecommunications and broadband infrastructure to service growing businesses, particularly those of a rural nature. Sustainability and community will be improved with the aim of providing services and facilities in one accessible location. It should also help to address waste water capacity constraints affecting outlying villages such as Rufford and parts of Scarisbrick.

Policy:	IF4: Developer contributions
Objectives:	For new development to contribute to mitigating its impact on infrastructure, services and the environment and to contribute to community requirements through developer contributions.
Proposed outcome:	For development to help fund improvements to infrastructure, services, environment and community requirements as required.
Beneficiaries:	West Lancashire residents
Comments:	Will be a Borough-wide requirement and will not have any specific effects upon the rural areas. It will work to provide general improvements in the rural areas in the vicinity of where development takes place. It will be important to ensure that rural areas are not overlooked when spending is considered.

Policy:	EN1: Low carbon development & energy infrastructure
Objectives:	To mitigate the impacts of climate change and promote low carbon development, encouraging renewable energy schemes and low emissions modes of transport.
Proposed outcome:	To reduce climate change and have encouraged renewable energy infrastructure and low emissions modes of transport. To have reduced the carbon footprint of the Borough and improved health and the environment.
Beneficiaries:	West Lancashire – residents and environment. Contributed to improvements in Lancashire, North West, England and global
Comments:	Will be a Borough-wide requirement and will not have any specific effects upon the rural areas. Rural areas in West Lancashire, by their flat, open nature, may contain suitable sites with which to locate wind turbines and so may result in some impact on the rural landscape. Every opportunity will be taken to limit any detrimental impact that this may have.

Policy:	EN2: Preserving & enhancing West Lancashire's natural environment
Objectives:	To preserve, protect, safeguard and enhance biodiversity sites, parks and strategic green links.
Proposed outcome:	To have protected and enhanced biodiversity and green links. For the health of residents to have improved through better access to natural leisure facilities.
Beneficiaries:	West Lancashire environment and residents
Comments:	Will be a Borough-wide requirement and will not have any specific effects upon the rural areas, although many of the biodiversity areas are located in the rural areas, such as the Ribble Estuary and Martin Mere.

Policy:	EN3: Provision of green infrastructure and open recreation space
Objectives:	To provide, protect and enhance a network of green infrastructure and open space, including recreational facilities and linear parks.
Proposed outcome:	To have provided and protected green infrastructure and open spaces. For the health of residents to have improved through better access to recreational facilities.
Beneficiaries:	West Lancashire environment and residents
Comments:	Will be a Borough-wide requirement and will not have any specific effects upon the rural areas. The Council's Open Space study will be used to direct improvements to the correct places in order to strengthen the existing network. This will include deficiencies in the rural areas.

Policy:	EN4: Preserving and enhancing West Lancashire's built environment
Objectives:	That all development should be of quality design and enhance cultural and heritage assets to promote West Lancashire's distinctive character. Landscape character should also be protected and promoted.
Proposed outcome:	That West Lancashire distinctive character would have been promoted through good quality design, landscaping and cultural and heritage assets.
Beneficiaries:	West Lancashire environment and residents
Comments:	Will be a Borough-wide requirement and will not have any specific effects upon the rural areas, other than working to protect the landscape and cultural assets. Good quality of development may help to promote tourism within the Borough creating jobs and boosting the economy.

5.0 Conclusions

- 5.1 The policies within the Local Plan Preferred Options document have been carefully considered to ensure that opportunities to improve both urban and rural areas can be taken advantage of, thereby delivering sustainability in the Borough.
- 5.2 The evidence base for the Local Plan has established the key issues for the rural areas, including the need for affordable housing, specialised accommodation, improving and diversifying rural employment opportunities and protecting agriculture, improving public transport accessibility and services and improving the quality and quantity of open spaces.
- 5.3 The policies contained within the Local Plan Preferred Options endeavour to promote and protect the rural areas rather than affect them detrimentally in any way. Whilst it is not sustainable to enable too much development within the rural areas, some development will benefit the rural areas by providing housing, improving transport services and supporting the rural economy, which will work to address the key issues identified.

- 5.4 Policies should not have any significant detrimental impacts on the quality and character of the natural rural landscape, and improvements to the environment should encourage tourism to the Borough's countryside areas.
- 5.5 Furthermore, the policies also adhere to the Council's corporate strategy priorities:
- Delivering cost effective services that are accessible to all
 - Protecting and improving the environment and keeping our streets clean and tidy
 - Combating crime and the fear of crime
 - Working to create opportunities for and retain good quality jobs in particular for local people
 - Improving housing and striving to achieve affordable housing that is available for local people
 - Providing opportunities for leisure and culture that together with other council services contribute to healthier communities