



Local Development Scheme

West Lancashire Borough Council

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WEST LANCASHIRE



LOCAL PLAN

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Chapter 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Local Development Scheme (LDS) is a project plan for the preparation of the Local Plan for West Lancashire and any associated Supplementary Planning Documents or Neighbourhood Plans. The production of an LDS is a requirement on Local Planning Authorities arising from the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as amended by Section 111 of the Localism Act 2011. Furthermore, the Council's adherence to the timescale it sets itself within the LDS will be used as a performance measure.
- 1.2 This Local Development Scheme provides the project plan for the preparation of a new Local Plan for West Lancashire that it is anticipated will cover the period 2023-2040. This version of the LDS replaces that previously produced in March 2021. It includes the following Chapters:
- Chapter 1 provides an introduction and offers a background to why the Council has prepared an LDS and what its purpose is, as well providing a list of the current set of local planning policy documents;
 - Chapter 2 identifies the topics that we envisage will make up a new Local Plan for West Lancashire and the likely timescale for preparing the Local Plan;
 - Chapter 3 looks at the evidence base that will underpin the production of the Local Plan;
 - Chapter 4 identifies the resources available to the Growth and Development Service of the Council to support the preparation of a new Local Plan; and
 - Chapter 5 considers the risks that exist which could slow progress on the Local Plan and some of the mitigation measures which can be put in place.

Background

- 1.3 The current West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027 was adopted in October 2013 and whilst there remains six years of its period to run, the context surrounding planning and development is constantly changing and national planning policy is evolving with it. This means that local planning policy, such as Local Plans, can quickly become out of date if they are not reviewed and updated accordingly. In particular, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was revised in July 2021, and paragraph 33 of this now requires that local planning authorities review their Local Plan policies at least once every five years, and then update them as necessary.

- 1.4 To this end, when the national requirement for a five-yearly review was introduced, the Council had already embarked on a 'Local Plan Review' (which was effectively a review and an update, under the terminology of paragraph 33 of the NPPF), although this Local Plan Review was ceased by a decision of Cabinet in September 2019. In December 2019, a formal review of the West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027 was undertaken, in line with guidance and best practice associated with paragraph 33 of the NPPF. This review, reported to Cabinet in January 2020, demonstrated that a full update of the Local Plan is required, i.e. that it is most appropriate to prepare an entirely new Local Plan for the Borough.
- 1.5 Such an update is necessary because an out-of-date Local Plan can have two main negative consequences. Firstly, an out-of-date Local Plan can stymie necessary growth, both economically and in terms of providing the right kind of development in the right place in a timely fashion. Secondly, if local planning policy is out of date, it can be ineffective in managing and guiding where appropriate development should take place, and can lead to a situation where the Council has less control or choice in its planning decisions.
- 1.6 Therefore, while the current adopted Local Plan for West Lancashire still has six years to run, the Council considers it necessary to begin work on a new Local Plan that will bring the planning policies that guide development in the Borough up-to-date and consistent with the most recent evidence. While the new Local Plan is being prepared, all policies in the current, adopted Local Plan will remain effective and a part of the Development Plan for the Borough until they are replaced by new policies in a newly adopted Local Plan. **The only deviation from the adopted Local Plan policy will be to use the standard Local Housing Need calculation to set the housing requirement for West Lancashire until a new Local Plan is adopted (in accordance with paragraph 73 of the NPPF) for the purposes of the Housing Delivery Test and for calculating the five-year housing land supply in West Lancashire.**
- 1.7 Producing any Local Plan is a major project that requires significant resources. A project management approach is vitally important to enable the Plan's production within a given timescale. The Council views the LDS as a key project management tool in the production of its Local Plan. The LDS has three main purposes:
- To inform people of how the Local Plan will be prepared and the likely timescale involved;

- To establish work priorities and enable work programmes to be formed; and
- To set a timescale for the monitoring and review of the Local Plan and associated documents.

1.8 This LDS provides a project plan for preparing a new Local Plan for West Lancashire. Future iterations of the LDS may include project plans for new Supplementary Planning Documents or Neighbourhood Plans, should any need to be prepared, and for which the Council is responsible. Minerals and Waste matters are the responsibility of Lancashire County Council, and so the preparation of the relevant development plan documents (DPDs) related to those matters do not form part of this LDS.

Current Local Planning Policy documents

1.9 The current adopted Development Plan for West Lancashire is made up of four documents:

- The West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027 DPD (October 2013);
- The Joint Lancashire Minerals and Waste Development Framework Core Strategy DPD (February 2009);
- The Joint Lancashire Minerals and Waste Local Plan: Site Allocation and Development Management Policies DPD (September 2013); and
- The Burscough Parish Neighbourhood Plan (July 2019) (affecting planning decisions in the parish of Burscough only).

1.10 In addition, one policy from the West Lancashire Replacement Local Plan 2001-2016 (WLRLP) was saved at the time of the adoption of the current Local Plan. WLRLP policy DE4 – Caravan Sites for Gypsies and Travelling Show People – is saved, and therefore is currently still part of the Development Plan for West Lancashire.

1.11 The Council has several Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) that are current and several Supplementary Planning Guidance documents (SPGs) that have been retained and are still relevant:

- [Development in the Green Belt SPD](#) (October 2015)
- [Yew Tree Farm, Burscough Masterplan SPD](#) (February 2015)
- [Provision of Public Open Space in New Residential Developments SPD](#) (September 2014)
- [Skelmersdale Town Centre Masterplan SPD](#) (September 2008)

- [Design Guide SPD \(January 2008\)](#)
- [Accommodation for Temporary Agricultural Workers SPG](#)
- [Affordable Housing SPG](#)
- [Design Guide for Shop Fronts SPG](#)
- [Natural Areas and Areas of Landscape History Importance SPG](#)
- [Trees and Development SPG](#)
- [Site Planning - Layout and Design SPG](#)
- [Dalton Village Design Statement SPG](#)
- [Whalleys Housing and Mixed-Use Sites SPG](#)
- [Whitemoss Business Park SPG](#)
- [Land West of Stanley Industrial Estate SPG](#)

1.12 The Council also has a **Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)**, adopted in September 2020. The SCI sets out whom the Council will consult on various aspects of planning, and what methods the Council will use.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

1.13 CIL is not technically local planning policy, or a matter that is required to be reported in the LDS, but it is inextricably linked to local planning, being a levy that is placed on new development at the time planning permission is granted. As a new Local Plan is prepared, it is inevitable that a new CIL Charging Schedule will need to be prepared in order to ensure that CIL is charged at the correct level, based on viability evidence that incorporates the new local planning policy context. The Council will therefore determine in due course the most appropriate time to review the CIL Charging Schedule, and will plan for it in a future iteration of this LDS. However, there is also a possibility that, in the future, CIL charges will be set nationally, given the proposals in the Planning for the Future White Paper (August 2020).

Chapter 2 Updating the Local Plan – a timetable

2.1 The timetable for the preparing a new Local Plan is set out in the chart on the following page, and this chapter seeks to explain a little more about key stages in preparing the new Local Plan.

The New Plan Period

2.2 Given the timetable below, which would see the new Local Plan adopted by the end of 2024, and the fact that paragraph 22 of the NPPF requires that '*strategic policies* [in a new Local Plan] *should look ahead over a minimum 15 year period from adoption*', it is proposed to extend the period that the new Local Plan should cover until 2040, i.e. to cover a 17-year Plan period from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2040. This will ensure that the Plan has at least 15 years to run even if its adoption is delayed by any unforeseen event (as it was over the past year by the COVID-19 pandemic).

Regulation 18 consultation and Preparation of Evidence

- 2.3 Regulation 18 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 essentially requires that, when preparing a new Local Plan, the Council must consult on the 'subject' of a Local Plan that it is proposing to prepare, and what it 'ought to contain'. As such, the Council proposes to bring forward a Regulation 18 consultation over Winter 2021 / 22 on the potential content of a new West Lancashire Local Plan 2023-2040. This is more than a year later than originally planned due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns (which delayed preparation as Council staff were redeployed to frontline services to help support the response to the pandemic in West Lancashire), as well as a significant change in senior staff within the Council's Growth & Development Service over recent months.
- 2.4 This Regulation 18 consultation will identify the key issues the Council believes the Local Plan needs to address, options for how planning policies might address those issues, and an indication of the Council's preferred option for the approach planning policies in the Local Plan might take to deal with each of those issues (based on the best available evidence and best practice at that time). The Council will host the Regulation 18 consultation on an online consultation platform, and it will be designed with the intention of making it as easy as possible to learn more about, and provide helpful feedback on, the issues, options and preferred options identified by the Council.

Stage of Preparation	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q4 2020	Q1 2021	Q2 2021	Q3 2021	Q4 2021	Q1 2022	Q2 2022	Q3 2022	Q4 2022	Q1 2023	Q2 2023	Q3 2023	Q4 2023	Q1 2024	Q2 2024	Q3 2024	Q4 2024
Preparation of Evidence																				
Preparation of Regulation 18 Consultation																				
Regulation 18 Public Consultation								*	*											
Preparation of Pre-Submission Local Plan																				
Public Consultation on Site Allocations												*								
Publication / Pre-Submission Consultation																*				
Submission to Planning Inspectorate																	*			
Examination in Public																				
Receipt of Inspector's Report																				*
Adoption of Local Plan																				*

- 2.5 Gathering evidence to better understand key planning issues is an essential part of preparing a new Local Plan as this evidence must directly inform new local planning policy. Given that the Council had, until September 2019, been working on a Local Plan Review for West Lancashire, a great deal of evidence is already available, and much of this will be of use as the new Local Plan is prepared. However, some issues will require more up-to-date evidence, particularly in relation to the key issues of need and demand for new housing and economic development. Some evidence studies also need to assess the specific proposals in a new Local Plan. As a result, the evidence collation stage will happen throughout the Local Plan preparation process right up until the Publication / Pre-Submission document has been prepared (see below). Preparation of evidence is covered in greater detail in the next chapter.
- 2.6 The above timetable for the Local Plan also includes one significant new element compared to the previous (March 2021) LDS, highlighted in yellow in the above chart. This is a separate, additional public consultation on the proposed development requirements for West Lancashire for the Plan period, and the proposed site allocations necessary to meet those requirements. This consultation would be an additional consultation under Regulation 18, and would enable specific engagement on the Council's consideration of the issue of development needs and site allocations before it finalises the Local Plan document that it wants to submit for Examination.

Publication of the Pre-Submission Local Plan, and Submission for Examination

- 2.7 Following the initial Regulation 18 consultation in winter 2021/22, and taking into account the feedback received through that process, the Council can then start to draw up the actual new Local Plan document, which will include a series of planning policies (strategic and non-strategic), site allocations and a Policies Map. The proposed additional consultation on development requirements and site allocations will also feed into this process. This culminates in the publication of what is known as the Pre-Submission version of the Local Plan (covered by Regulation 19 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012).
- 2.8 This Pre-Submission version of the Plan is essentially the 'final draft' which the Council wishes to submit for Examination. It is published to give members of the public and other stakeholders the opportunity to make formal representations on the Pre-Submission version of the Local Plan. These representations are then submitted, along with the Local Plan, to the Secretary of State, ready for the Plan's examination.

- 2.9 Any representations (comments) made at this Publication / Pre-Submission stage need to be made formally through a specific form, using a set format prescribed by the Planning Inspectorate to ensure all comments relate to the 'Tests of Soundness', and / or whether the Plan has been prepared in accordance with all relevant legal requirements. This is because those representations are passed directly to the Planning Inspector appointed to examine the proposed new Local Plan once the Council decides to submit the Local Plan, and the Inspector will consider those representations as he / she examines the proposed new Local Plan.
- 2.10 Compared to the previous (March 2021) LDS, the stage of preparing the Pre-Submission Local Plan for Regulation 19 has been elongated in the above timetable. This is because of the desire to incorporate an additional stage of consultation on the development requirements and site allocations (see 2.6 above), and also to allow more time given anticipated changes to national guidance on preparation of Local Plans that may need to be incorporated (following on from the proposals in the Planning White Paper). In addition, the timescales reflect the later Regulation 18 consultation and the desire to avoid any consultation over the summer period, when many people go on holiday.

Examination and Adoption of the Local Plan

- 2.11 Once the Local Plan is submitted, it is in the hands of the Planning Inspectorate to appoint an Inspector to undertake the Examination and to write a report concluding whether or not the Local Plan is 'sound', outlining any changes that are necessary to make it sound. The Examination will include public hearing sessions facilitated by the Planning Inspector, designed to help the Inspector better understand all aspects of, and concerns about, the proposed new Local Plan. If there are significant changes to the Plan proposed by the Inspector (known as 'main modifications') there may need to be a further stage of public consultation during the Examination, with all responses ultimately being considered by the Inspector. Once the Local Plan has been found sound by the Inspector, the Council can adopt it.

Summary of Planning Policy documents to be produced

West Lancashire Local Plan 2023-2040													
Document Details	<p>Role & Content: Sets out the main planning context of the Borough, the development strategy for the Borough and priority locations for development, development management policies and site allocations;</p> <p>Status: Development Plan Document (DPD);</p> <p>Chain of Conformity: The Local Plan should conform with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Any additional DPDs or SPDs, and any Neighbourhood Plans, should conform with the Local Plan;</p> <p>Geographic Coverage: Whole Borough.</p>												
Timetable	<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Regulation 18 Consultation</td> <td>November 2021 - January 2022</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Development Requirements & Site Allocations Consultation</td> <td>November – December 2022</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Publication / Pre-Submission</td> <td>October - December 2023</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Submission to Planning Inspectorate</td> <td>January 2024</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Examination in Public (incl. Hearings)</td> <td>January - December 2024</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Adoption</td> <td>December 2024</td> </tr> </table>	Regulation 18 Consultation	November 2021 - January 2022	Development Requirements & Site Allocations Consultation	November – December 2022	Publication / Pre-Submission	October - December 2023	Submission to Planning Inspectorate	January 2024	Examination in Public (incl. Hearings)	January - December 2024	Adoption	December 2024
Regulation 18 Consultation	November 2021 - January 2022												
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Arrangements for Production	<p>Prepared by Strategic Planning, Regeneration & Implementation Team with support from wider Growth and Development Service;</p> <p>Input from other Council services and partner organisations as required;</p> <p>Input and approval from Members principally via Cabinet and the Local Plan Cabinet Working Group and, for submission and adoption, via Council;</p> <p>Adequate staffing resource is available within Department for production.</p>												
Progress	<p>Preparation commenced January 2020 but work was delayed due to the COVID19 pandemic as staff were redeployed to frontline services to support the Council's response to the pandemic in West Lancashire. In addition, changes in senior staff within the Growth & Development Service have temporarily impacted the resources available to prepare the Local Plan over late spring / summer 2021.</p> <p>As a result, preparation of the Regulation 18 consultation material and associated evidence have been delayed. Consequently, the Regulation 18 consultation will now take place in winter 2021/22 and, overall, there will be a delay in the timetable through to Submission of the Local Plan for Examination in January 2024.</p>												

Chapter 3 The Evidence Base

3.1 The preparation of a new Local Plan requires an extensive evidence base covering a wide range of topics. This section provides a summary of what evidence the Council has collected, is collecting, and when, to inform this process. This list could well change, especially if feedback from consultation with stakeholders identifies a gap in the proposed evidence base. All published versions of the various evidence base studies (whether in draft or as a final version) are available on the Council's website at:

<https://www.westlancs.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/the-local-plan/the-local-plan-2023-2040/evidence-base.aspx>

- **Liverpool City Region Strategic Housing and Employment Land Market Assessment (SHELMA)**

The Council has been working with the Liverpool City Region Authorities on the preparation of a SHELMA since the start of 2016. The SHELMA identifies the objectively-assessed need (OAN) for housing and employment land across the City Region and by individual Authority to 2037. The final version of the SHELMA (Part 1 (March 2018), Part 2a (June 2018) and Part 2b (August 2019)) is on the Council's website. Part 2 of the SHELMA investigates the potential supply of sites for large-scale B8 uses given the need identified in the SHELMA for large-scale B8 across the LCR and West Lancashire.

- **Affordable and Specialist Housing Needs Study (ASHNS)**

Whilst the SHELMA looks at overall housing needs, the ASHNS (February 2018) looks specifically at the local need for affordable housing in its various forms (social rent, affordable rent, shared ownership, etc.), as well as the need for housing for the elderly, and for people living in houseboats in caravans (non-travellers). The final report is available on the Council's website.

- **Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA)**

A fresh HEDNA study is required to update the evidence informing all aspects of employment and housing need and demand in the Borough. Preparation of the HEDNA started in early 2020, but was paused while work on the Local Plan was delayed due to COVID-19. Work will resume on the study shortly and the final version will be published on the Council's website in Autumn 2021 as part of the Regulation 18 consultation.

This new study will replace the SHELMA (insofar as it considers West Lancashire's needs), the ASHNS and the previous (2017) HEDNA and Housing Growth Scenarios work, and so will bring this evidence up-to-date for the new Local Plan. The study is considering:

- What economic and employment growth (by sector) is anticipated;
- What overall housing growth is therefore needed (demographic growth plus any as a result of economic / employment growth); and
- What specific affordable and specialist housing needs there are in the Borough.

This study will also inform the preparation of a new Economic Development Strategy and a new Housing Strategy for West Lancashire.

- **Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA)**

The SHELAA has two functions:

- 1) to enable all sites that are potentially available for development to be brought to the attention of the Council and ultimately be assessed as to their suitability for development, and
- 2) to identify the 5, 10 and 15-year supply of sites in the SHELAA that are currently, in principle, policy-compliant with the current, adopted Local Plan.

The SHELAA is generally updated each year. A fresh Call for Sites was issued in early 2020 which was used to inform the 2020/21 SHELAA Update (available on the Council website) and also to inform the Local Plan Regulation 18 public consultation.

- **Traveller Needs Assessment**

A Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment was undertaken by consultants in 2013/14 for Merseyside and West Lancashire. The Government changed the definition of 'Traveller' in 2016. A 2017 West Lancashire Traveller Needs Assessment provides an updated figure for accommodation needs for the travelling community in the Borough, taking into account this new definition. The study is available on the Council's website. This study will be updated as necessary later in 2022/23 to inform the new Local Plan.

- **Retail and Commercial Leisure Study**

The Council appointed consultants Peter Brett Associates to produce a Borough-wide Retail and Leisure Study in order to meet requirements set out by paragraph 85 of the NPPF. The Study identifies future retail and leisure floorspace requirements for the Borough with a view to informing the allocation of sites for future town centre uses in the Local Plan, undertaking health checks of Burscough, Ormskirk and Skelmersdale town centres and identifying future strategies for each of these centres. The study was completed in June 2018 and is available on the Council's website. This study is to be updated as necessary later in 2022/23 to inform the new Local Plan.

- **Traffic / Transport Impact Assessment**

The Council appointed consultants WYG to prepare an assessment identifying the additional traffic flows that were considered likely to be created by new sites proposed in the Local Plan Review Preferred Options, and how that traffic would affect the existing Key Route Network and Strategic Route Network. Whilst the Local Plan Review was ceased, this study highlighted the need to undertake a closer look at how new developments and new transport-related proposals may affect how people use the Borough's highway network. Lancashire County Council (LCC) has thus commissioned highways modelling for the Borough's highway network. This will allow the Borough Council, in close consultation with LCC and Highways England, to consider where improvements may be required on particular routes / junctions to mitigate for additional flows, as proposals for new site allocations, or for new transport infrastructure, are prepared and tested.

- **Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP)**

The Council published a draft IDP alongside the Local Plan Review Preferred Options consultation in 2018. As a new Local Plan is prepared, the IDP will be developed in consultation with Infrastructure Providers to consider how the existing infrastructure in the Borough will be able to cope with the additional demands placed upon it by any new development proposals, and to identify any improvements that will need to be made to infrastructure to meet any increased demand from the new Local Plan. A final IDP will be published alongside the Pre-Submission version of the Local Plan at the Publication stage.

- **Sustainable Settlement Study**

The Council prepared a Sustainable Settlement Study in 2017 to consider how 'sustainable' each town and village in West Lancashire is, considering access to key services. This has been updated in 2021 to inform the preparation of the new Local Plan and is available on the Council's website. The Study guides the setting of an appropriate settlement hierarchy in the new Local Plan and informs deliberations over which settlements should be the focus for new development.

- **Playing Pitch Strategy Review**

A West Lancashire Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) was adopted as Council policy in February 2016. The PPS considers a range of sports including football, rugby, cricket, hockey and bowls and identifies future needs for pitches. It recommends a number of priority projects for pitches and associated facilities such as changing rooms, and will be used to identify which pitches and facilities should be protected and where any new provision should be made. The PPS was refreshed in 2018 in accordance with Sport England's Playing Pitch Strategy Guidance for keeping a strategy robust and up to date. This PPS Review, prepared by consultants KKP, is available on the Council's website. This strategy will be updated as necessary in 2021/22 to inform the new Local Plan.

- **Open Space Study**

The Council appointed consultants KKP to update a Borough-wide Open Space Study to identify local open space needs, audit local site provision, set local open space standards and apply those standards to identify surpluses and deficiencies in different types of open space across the Borough. The 2018 Study developed a strategy, identifying where and how open space should be protected and enhanced, and where future new provision should be created. This will be used to determine open space designations and planning policies in the new Local Plan. The 2018 Open Space Study is available on the Council's website.

- **Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)**

NPPF paragraph 156 indicates that Local Plans should be supported by a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA). The primary purpose of the SFRA is to provide information on flood risk from all sources in the Borough and inform

decision-making in the emerging Local Plan in terms of the allocation of land and drafting of policies to manage flood risk.

The Council consulted on a draft Level 1 SFRA between March and April 2017. A preliminary draft Level 2 SFRA was also prepared and published alongside the Local Plan Review Preferred Options consultation in 2018.

The Level 1 and Level 2 SFRAs were updated in light of comments received during consultation. Consultants JBA were appointed in spring 2020 to prepare a more detailed Level 2 SFRA to assess site allocations proposed in the Local Plan Review Preferred Options which may impact on flood risk. This SFRA is available on the Council's website, but an updated SFRA will be prepared as necessary in 2022 to inform the preparation of the new Local Plan.

- **Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy**

The Council prepared a Green Infrastructure and Cycling Strategy and adopted it in September 2017. The Strategy sets out the Council's aspirations for new Green Infrastructure and cycling infrastructure across West Lancashire, in particular the proposed Linear Parks and the 'West Lancs Wheel'. As such, the Local Plan will be prepared with regard to how parts of the Strategy might be delivered alongside (or by) new development.

- **Low Carbon and Renewable Energy Study**

The Council appointed consultants Wood to prepare a study that assessed the potential capacity of West Lancashire to provide Renewable Energy or Low Carbon Developments, taking into account constraints that would impact on the suitability of such developments in a given location. The study identifies areas which are most suitable for particular types of Renewable Energy developments, and this will inform any policy on Renewable Energy developments in the new Local Plan. This study is available on the Council's website.

- **Local Plan Viability Assessment**

Keppie Massie were appointed to prepare a Viability Assessment for the Local Plan Review but the study was halted when this Plan was ceased. As proposals for a new Local Plan are prepared, a fresh Viability Assessment will be prepared in 2022/23 to assess and inform the proposed policies and allocations, to ensure they will enable viable developments to come forward in West Lancashire. This study will also inform any review of the CIL Charging Schedule.

- **Technical, Thematic and Spatial Evidence Papers**

The Council has prepared a range of evidence papers to summarise the available evidence, data, and information on particular topics and to help explain how proposed policies in the new Local Plan were drawn up.

- **Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment**

A Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) is a legal requirement as part of a Local Plan preparation. The SA/SEA assesses the sustainability merits and environmental impacts of the Local Plan and the alternative options that have been considered. As such, it is an integral part of the evidence and preparation / decision-making process on the Local Plan. The SA/SEA will also consider health as part of the appraisal process.

- **Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)**

A HRA is another legal requirement; it considers the impacts that the Local Plan may have on internationally-designated nature sites, such as Martin Mere and the Ribble Estuary. The HRA must first do a 'scoping exercise' to determine whether impacts are potentially likely. If impacts are likely, an Appropriate Assessment of those impacts is carried out, to identify any issues which the Local Plan must address, or mitigation required to minimise the impacts of new development.

- **Equality Impact Assessment**

Many aspects of new development and the way a place functions can have impacts on a population and can have different effects on different groups of the population. As such, the Council will prepare an Equality Impact Assessment of the Local Plan in order to identify ways in which the Local Plan can be improved, to ensure that no particular group in society is prejudiced by the proposals.

Chapter 4 Resources

- 4.1 The new Local Plan will be produced by the Council’s Strategic Planning, Regeneration & Implementation Team, but a document as wide ranging as a Local Plan will inevitably involve input from various parts of the Council as well as from external partners.
- 4.2 The Strategic Planning, Regeneration & Implementation Manager will take the lead role in developing the new Local Plan, project managing the process and the preparation of a new Local Plan and all other local planning policy documents and CIL documents.
- 4.3 The Strategic Planning, Regeneration & Implementation Team will liaise closely with both frontline and support services across the Council in developing the Plan, including:
- The Development, Heritage & Environment Team (who will use the Local Plan to make decisions on planning applications and advise on design, heritage, trees, and landscaping)
 - The Building Control and Technical Services Team (who will advise on flooding, drainage and other engineering matters, and on how policies may best inter-relate with the Building Regulations)
 - The Wellbeing and Leisure Service (on leisure / public open space and health matters)
 - The Housing and Regulatory Service (on housing, the Council’s Climate Change Strategy, environmental protection, public health and community safety matters)
- 4.4 In addition to the Strategic Planning, Regeneration & Implementation Manager, the staffing resource of the Strategic Planning, Regeneration & Implementation Team includes four officers working on planning policy matters and CIL/S106, all of whom are (or are working towards being) Members of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI). In addition, the team includes specialists on Economic Development and Housing Strategy. It is considered that this level of staff, supplemented by a budget to cover the costs of external specialist consultancy advice needed to prepare certain evidence studies, is sufficient to adequately resource the preparation of a new Local Plan, and its evidence, up to the point of submission as well as the following:

- Preparation of all other local planning policy documents, including any Neighbourhood Plans;
- Responding to new Government planning policies, and other Government strategies and plans related to Planning;
- Engaging with adjacent authorities and other agencies on planning, economic development and housing strategy matters, including inputting on key strategies and projects prepared by those other authorities and agencies (e.g. Transport Strategies);
- All monitoring required to prepare the Annual Monitoring Report and Housing Land Supply position;
- The on-going maintenance of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and Infrastructure Delivery Schedule;
- Administration of the Community Infrastructure Levy and how it is spent;
- Implementation of key projects to help deliver the proposals within the Local Plan and other documents, particularly transport and infrastructure related;
- Preparation of other key Council strategies such as the Economic Development Strategy, Housing Strategy and Town Centre Strategies; and
- Advising the Council's Development Management Team on the interpretation of planning policies and economic development and housing strategy matters and, where necessary, attending planning appeals.

4.5 Given that West Lancashire Borough Council is a two-tier Authority with Lancashire County Council, the Strategic Planning, Regeneration & Implementation Team will also continue to liaise closely with the County Council, especially on issues of highways and transportation, as well as having reference to the County's planning policy work on Minerals and Waste and their role as Education Authority and in helping to deliver Economic Development. On the issue of strategic planning and transport, the Strategic Planning, Regeneration & Implementation Team also liaise closely with Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (as the authors of the LCR Strategic Development Strategy and as Merseytravel, the public transport executive for Merseyside, extending into parts of West Lancashire) and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (including Transport for Greater Manchester).

4.6 Resources have also been, and will continue to be, saved through effective partnership working with neighbouring Local Authorities. The Strategic Planning, Regeneration & Implementation Team are working closely with their peers in Merseyside, Lancashire and Greater Manchester in order to deliver 'joined-up' cross-

border planning on many issues that are not restricted by Local Authority boundaries. This helps to fulfil the Duty to Co-operate introduced by the Localism Act 2011, and will include a range of Statements of Common Ground with neighbouring authorities as necessary (including the existing first iteration of the LCR Spatial Planning Statement of Common Ground which is available on the Council's website).

- 4.7 The Strategic Planning, Regeneration & Implementation Team will also continue to liaise closely with a wide range of infrastructure providers to ensure that development is located where infrastructure is already provided or to consider how new or improved infrastructure can be provided over the Local Plan period to meet the needs created by development in the new Local Plan.

Chapter 5 Risk Assessment

- 5.1 The planning system requires effective project management techniques to ensure, as far as possible, that stated timetables are adhered to for the preparation of the Local Plan, and other local planning policy documents. Using such techniques, the Strategic Planning, Regeneration & Implementation Team will endeavour to ensure that progress is kept 'on track', in accordance with the dates set out within this LDS. However, there is a variety of circumstances which alone, or in combination, can conspire to delay the preparation process.
- 5.2 It is important that the Council, the local community and all other stakeholders in the planning process, are aware of the possible risks to preparation. This is so that the risks can be minimised, or mitigation measures put in place in the case of delays being occasioned. The following table identifies some of the more likely risks that could prejudice Local Plan preparation and the mitigation measures that could be employed.

Risk	Mitigation
<p>Legislation / Government Guidance</p> <p>Publication of national planning policy statements can generate new issues that the Local Plan, or its preparation, must address, sometimes causing delays.</p>	<p>Maintain close liaison with latest national guidance and its preparation.</p> <p>Revise Local Plan timetable if necessary.</p> <p>Obtain adequate budgetary provision for consultancy support if required.</p>
<p>Planning Inspectorate</p> <p>Delays could be caused if the Local Plan or other documents take longer than expected in the Examination process.</p>	<p>Keep in touch with Inspectorate and advise them of requests for Examinations at the earliest possible time.</p> <p>The Council will have regard to Inspectors' decisions elsewhere to seek to ensure the Council is following best practice.</p>
<p>Legal / Soundness</p> <p>The Local Plan could fail the Tests of Soundness which would significantly delay the process.</p> <p>Legal challenge to document could see Local Plan, or part of it, quashed.</p>	<p>Ensure a robust evidence base and use the PAS Local Plan toolkit.</p> <p>Draw on external expertise where necessary to ensure evidence and approach to policy is robust.</p> <p>Ensure procedures, Acts and Regulations are complied with.</p>

Risk	Mitigation
<p>Other External Bodies</p> <p>The planning system involves complex arrangements for co-operation, consultation, engagement and evidence gathering. Failure on the part of other bodies to respond on time or to provide adequate responses (which require subsequent clarification) could cause significant delay to work programmes.</p>	<p>Contact external bodies at the earliest opportunity and communicate clearly and regularly with them to minimise risk of no / poor responses and therefore delays.</p>
<p>Joint Working</p> <p>There can be challenges in achieving joint working with other local authorities on evidence base and ensuring that the Duty to Co-operate is fulfilled because each authority is working to its own programme and may have its own particular concerns with regard to areas of evidence. As such, projects / evidence studies can take longer when joint working is involved.</p>	<p>Establish clear working arrangements with other local authorities and ensure strong programme / project management.</p>
<p>Staffing</p> <p>Individual absences due to leave, personnel changes or sickness can cause delays in document production.</p> <p>Staff could leave the authority and could be difficult to replace, therefore causing delays to document production while the team is under-strength.</p>	<p>The Local Plan timetable should be set on a realistic basis taking into account the staff resources available.</p> <p>Ensure quick replacement of staff wherever possible.</p> <p>Flexibility of staff within the Growth and Development Service may enable opportunities for planning officers from other teams in the Service to help with workload.</p> <p>Where there is financial resource available, some elements of work can be undertaken by consultants.</p>
<p>Political Direction / Management</p> <p>Members requiring late amendments to proposed documents or not being willing to approve a document for consultation / submission / adoption may cause delays.</p>	<p>Early consultation and information sharing with Members should reduce the likelihood of late amendments being required or documents being rejected.</p>
<p>Reduced Council Resources</p> <p>In the current climate of austerity and declining Council budgets, it is possible the resource available to the Growth and Development Service could be reduced, affecting the speed at which a Local Plan can be prepared.</p>	<p>Explore all opportunities for joint working and service sharing.</p> <p>Maximise flexibility across the Service.</p> <p>Revise the Local Plan timetable if necessary.</p>

Risk	Mitigation
<p>Evidence Base</p> <p>The Evidence Base behind a Local Plan can become out-of-date over time.</p> <p>The Planning Inspectorate provides guidance on how recent some of the key evidence needs to be to be considered up-to-date for Local Plan preparation.</p> <p>If preparation of a Local Plan takes too long, the evidence base may need reviewing, thereby creating further delays in the delivery of the Local Plan (as well as additional cost for the Council).</p>	<p>Ensure Members are aware of the time implications associated with their decisions on the Local Plan, to help keep the preparation process to schedule.</p>
<p>COVID-19</p> <p>Further delays due to COVID-19, or any equally significant future pandemic, may create further delays in the preparation of the Local Plan. This could affect the Local Plan preparation by redirecting key staff to other frontline services and by limiting opportunities for public consultation.</p>	<p>The relevant services of the Council for the Local Plan are now set up to work effectively from home with minimal disturbance to work programmes. However, staff within those services may have to be redirected to other frontline services as necessary to help deal with the situation in a pandemic.</p> <p>In such circumstances, there is little the Council can do without incurring significant additional cost to keep the Local Plan preparation progressing, and a further delay in preparation could consequently be inevitable.</p>