Report to: **Executive Overview & Scrutiny Committee**   **21 October 2021**

Cabinet   **2 November 2021**

Appendix A

West Lancashire Local Plan 2023-2040

Scope, Issues & Options Material

Please note this material comprises several different elements that together make up the Scope, Issues & Options consultation material, as listed below. These are not 'one document' as such, but are collated together in this Appendix A.

1. Scope

2. Portrait of West Lancashire

3. Issues

4. Vision

5. Objectives

6. Indicators

7. Policy Areas

West Lancashire Local Plan 2023 – 2040

Scope

We are preparing a new Local Plan for West Lancashire to cover the period 2023 – 2040.

We are inviting you to comment on what this new Local Plan for West Lancashire should contain (the 'scope' of the new Local Plan).

To help inform your thoughts on any comments you may wish to make at this initial 'scoping stage', we have listed below the policy areas that we think the new Local Plan should contain. In preparing these, we have sought to put sustainable development, health, nature, and the Council's declaration of a climate emergency at the heart of thinking on the new Local Plan

- **Strategic Policies**
  - o Delivering sustainable development – the 'settlement hierarchy' and the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' (from national planning policy)
  - o Housing requirements, employment land requirements, distribution of development around West Lancashire
  - o Climate change and environmental sustainability
  - o Settlement boundaries, Protected Land and Green Belt
  - o Strategic sites

- **Housing and Communities Policies**
  - o Whereabouts housing can be located (general policy)
  - o Housing site allocations
  - o Using land efficiently – 'brownfield' versus 'greenfield' development; housing density
  - o Dwelling sizes
  - o Affordable housing
  - o Housing for older people
  - o Custom and self-build housing
  - o Accommodation for students
  - o Accommodation for caravan and houseboat dwellers
  - o Accommodation for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople
  - o Temporary agricultural workers' dwellings
  - o Principles of 'place-making'
  - o Preserving the Borough's heritage
  - o Community Facilities

- **Economy and Employment Policies**
  - o Employment areas
  - o Employment site allocations
  - o The rural economy
  - o Town centres
  - o Education: Edge Hill University, skills and training

- **Environment and Health Policies**
  - o Preserving and enhancing the Borough's nature
  - o Landscape and land resources
  - o Flood risk and water resources
  - o Contamination and pollution
  - o Air quality
  - o Green infrastructure, open space, trees, woodlands and hedgerows:
  - o Healthy eating and drinking

- **Transport and Infrastructure Policies**
  - o Transport networks and access
  - o Parking standards and electric vehicle charging points
  - o Digital connectivity
  - o Low carbon and renewable energy
  - o Energy efficiency in new developments
  - o Water efficiency in new residential developments

- **Other Policies**
  - o Sequential tests – where they are required and how to do them
  - o Viability of development – what the Council will expect
  - o Developer contributions

Your Views

Is there anything else you think the new Local Plan should cover?

(Please list the items and explain why they should be included in the new Plan)

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Is there anything in the list above that you think should *not* be included in the new Local Plan?

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Do you have any other comments about the 'scope' of the new Local Plan?

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West Lancashire Local Plan 2023-2040

A PORTRAIT OF WEST LANCASHIRE

October 2021

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A Portrait of West Lancashire

Contents

1   Introduction

1.1   This 2021 'Portrait of West Lancashire' describes the different parts of West Lancashire, looking at six sub-areas of the Borough:

- Skelmersdale with Up Holland

- Ormskirk with Aughton

- Burscough

- The Northern Parishes (Rufford, North Meols (Banks), Tarleton, Hesketh Bank)

- The Eastern and Southern Parishes (Bispham, Dalton, Hilldale, Lathom, Newburgh, Parbold, Wrightington, and Bickerstaffe, Lathom South, Simonswood)

- The Western Parishes (Halsall, Downholland, Great Altcar, Scarisbrick)

1.2   It also looks at the Borough as a whole in terms of social and population matters, economic matters, transport and infrastructure, and the natural and built environment. More detail on these topics may be found in the Thematic Evidence Papers and the Annual Monitoring Reports (links →).

1.3   This document is essentially an update of the 'Spatial Portrait' contained in the 2012 West Lancashire Local Plan (link →). It reflects what has changed since 2012 in terms of the nature of West Lancashire and how the Borough functions in the wider Lancashire / Liverpool City Region area. From this, and from the Thematic Papers, one can identify what the most significant planning-related issues (link →) are for West Lancashire.

2   Skelmersdale with Up Holland

2.1.   Skelmersdale with Up Holland is designated in the current Local Plan as a Regional Town, the highest tier of West Lancashire's settlement hierarchy.   37% of the Borough's population live there (circa 35,000 in the unparished area of Skelmersdale and over 7,000 in the parish of Up Holland). The area contains a large number of services and facilities, a large stock of housing and employment opportunities. Retail and leisure uses are being improved and there are regular bus services that provide links to Liverpool, Wigan and Southport.

2.2.   Although historically there was some industry in the Skelmersdale with Up Holland area, the area was predominantly rural until the early 1960s with Up Holland being the larger settlement and Skelmersdale just a small mining community. However, this changed with the establishment of Skelmersdale New Town in 1961 which was planned to accommodate people displaced from the conurbation of Liverpool. Skelmersdale has subsequently grown to become the largest and most populous settlement in the Borough, but has not reached its originally planned size of 80,000 residents.

2.3.   Skelmersdale has a younger, more varied population structure than other areas of the Borough. However, life expectancy in the Skelmersdale wards of Digmoor, Birch Green and Tanhouse is the lowest in the Borough with men in the most deprived areas having life expectancies almost 10 years less than those in the least deprived areas[1]. Skelmersdale is the most deprived area in West Lancashire with 14 of its 23 Lower Super Output Areas (60%) featuring in the 20% most

Skelmersdale 'youth' Zone

deprived LSOAs nationally (compared with a figure of 14% for the remainder of West Lancashire). There is therefore a clear polarisation within the Borough between those areas with the highest and lowest levels of deprivation.

2.4.   Rates of unemployment are above average in Skelmersdale. The town has the highest proportion of people in the Borough with no qualifications and there is limited knowledge-based employment available. A significant proportion of Skelmersdale's residents are employed in the town, particularly in manual work in the manufacturing and industrial industries, suggesting that the skills base in the town is low.

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[1] The Seven Wards: A Focus on Skelmersdale, S Collins, Lancashire County Council, March 2015

2.5. The area has good access to the strategic road network with connections to the M58 and M6 beyond, as well as A-roads to Wigan, Ormskirk and St Helens. However, Skelmersdale has the highest proportions of people owning no vehicle, meaning that access to employment and services is increasingly dependent on public transport, and the location of facilities near to housing. The only railway station (Up Holland) is situated to the south east of Skelmersdale, relatively distant and disconnected from residential populations and only providing a limited service between Kirkby and Manchester Victoria via Wigan. As such, Skelmersdale is one of the largest towns in the country without a railway station. This has led the Council and its partners (Lancashire County Council and Merseytravel) to investigate the feasibility of providing a new rail link, joining the Kirkby-Wigan line with a new rail station in Skelmersdale that would provide direct services to both Liverpool and Manchester.

2.6. Skelmersdale, being a 'New Town', consists of clear residential, industrial and retail zones, separated by areas of green space. The presence of sizable employment areas on its outskirts means that the town is West Lancashire's key location for employment, containing 43% of all the Borough's employee jobs and over 70% of the Borough's designated employment land. The town centre contains the purpose-built Concourse Shopping Centre and bus station, some associated services, offices, the new West Lancashire College campus and an Asda superstore at the north-eastern fringe.

The Concourse

2.7. Work has begun on the Skelmersdale Town Centre regeneration scheme. The proposals plan to breathe new life into the area by bringing significant investment and new jobs, whilst also providing multiple benefits for the entire community. Connections through Skelmersdale will be improved and the development includes the construction of a new high street as well as enhancement to the public areas outside the library and a new leisure centre. A new cinema is also proposed in the Concourse Shopping Centre and work is ongoing to ensure this becomes a reality. This would help enhance the town centre's limited entertainment and night-time economy and should reduce the leakage of such spending from the Borough.

2.8. The new town legacy means that just under half of all homes in Skelmersdale are rented and while there is a large stock of housing, its quality is not always high and the choice of larger dwellings can be limited. Residential areas are of varying quality. The 'Radburn' style road layout means the town is essentially congestion-free. Pedestrians are largely segregated from the road system through a network of footpaths, underpasses and footbridges. Use of some of these facilities is limited because of a

perceived risk of crime. There are three local centres at Ashurst, Sandy Lane and Digmoor which offer a range of smaller shops and services.

2.9. The new town has extensive green spaces, with 56% of the area being classed as such. It includes Tawd Valley Park and the Green Flag awarded Beacon Country Park along with a variety of playing fields, wooded cloughs and other open spaces, giving much of the town an open, 'green' feel. The town is surrounded by Green Belt, much of which is the best and most versatile agricultural land (grades 1, 2 and 3a) with the highest quality grades 1 and 2 concentrated to the south and west of Skelmersdale. Additionally, there are several locally important biological heritage sites within and surrounding the town, in particular the Tawd Valley running from the north of the town right into the town centre. The area identified as being at risk from flooding is limited and is primarily confined to a narrow band following the River Tawd.

2.10. Aside from the lack of a rail link serving Skelmersdale and the need to provide an improved town centre, Skelmersdale with Up Holland is generally well served by local services and infrastructure, especially given that the town was originally intended to accommodate more than double its current population. In terms of education, primary school provision is more than adequate and, while attainment levels at secondary level could be improved, there is sufficient secondary school provision.

The Beacon

2.11. Up Holland adjoins Skelmersdale to the east and includes a conservation area and a scheduled ancient monument (Up Holland Benedictine Priory) as well as a nationally important wildlife site at the former Ravenhead Brick Works. It contains a local centre with a range of services, although residents arguably look more towards Wigan than to West Lancashire to meet their needs.

Up Holland Church

4

3   Ormskirk with Aughton

3.1.   Ormskirk is an attractive, relatively compact, historic market town situated centrally within West Lancashire. It is the Borough's second largest settlement (2011 population 18,000) and functions as the Borough's administrative centre. Ormskirk contains a full range of facilities and services – retail (town centre shops and two small retail parks), a twice-weekly market (first granted a charter in 1286), leisure, sports,

Ormskirk's historic market

civic functions, primary and secondary schools, a university, hospital, rail and bus stations, and a business park and industrial estate (although the amount of employment land for a settlement the size of Ormskirk is relatively low). The town centre is pedestrianised, much of it lying within a conservation area, containing historic and landmark buildings such as the clock tower and Ormskirk Parish Church with its distinctive joint spire and tower. There is a small parade of shops on County Road in the northern part of Ormskirk, providing local retail and services. Parts of Ormskirk have periodically suffered from flooding associated with the Hurlston Brook which runs south-east to north-west through the town.

3.2.   Aughton (2011 population of Aughton Parish: 8,000) is a mainly residential area lying directly south of Ormskirk on the rising ground of Holborn Hill, with Christ Church tower a local landmark and 'gateway' into Aughton from Ormskirk. While historically its own entity, Aughton effectively now functions as a 'suburb' of Ormskirk. Properties in Aughton tend to be less old, more 'up market', and less densely spread out than in much of Ormskirk. Apart from two small local centres, Aughton tends to rely on Ormskirk for its facilities and services.

3.3.   Being a moderately sized town, Ormskirk with Aughton in general has good infrastructure provision, with the widest range of services in West Lancashire. The town has reasonable public transport links to surrounding areas, with a fifteen minute frequency electric rail service to Liverpool, and an hourly diesel service to Preston.

However, there are no direct east or west rail links (e.g. to Manchester or Southport). Several bus routes converge at Ormskirk bus station, connecting to Liverpool, Southport, Preston, Skelmersdale and Wigan.

Ormskirk rail station

3.4.   The M58 motorway can be accessed three kilometres south east of the settlement, and the A59 provides good north-south road links, whilst the A570 provides north west – south east links. However, there are issues with congestion on the one-way road system around Ormskirk town centre, leading to problems with air quality (with the Borough's only designated Air Quality Management Area being located on Moor Street, adjacent to the bus station). At times, there is congestion between Ormskirk and the M58 motorway junction. Proposals for a bypass were in existence for several decades, but have been shelved, and the future planning for the area is being undertaken on the basis of there being no bypass. Cycling levels for the town are below average, the 'unfriendliness' of the one-way system for cyclists being a factor. Lancashire County Council has prepared a 'Movement Strategy' that seeks to improve traffic conditions for all road users in Ormskirk town centre. Various projects are planned or underway including improved cycle links, and a new bus station.

3.5.   Recent housing development of Ormskirk with Aughton has generally been 'infill' and / or 'brownfield' in nature with the exception of Grove Farm, a 300 home greenfield site on the northern edge of Ormskirk. There has been little employment and commercial development in the town, except in the case of retail; indeed several former employment sites have been redeveloped for housing.

3.6.   Like other centres, Ormskirk town centre has suffered as a result of general retail trends (out-of-town and internet shopping, and COVID-19). However, the town centre has generally fared better than average, and still has a good number of independent, specialist shops. The night-time economy has developed since 2012, with several new bars and restaurants, boosted by the patronage of the local student population. The Borough Council and local partners are working hard to help the Town Centre bounce back from the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects.

3.7.   Apart from small pockets of relative deprivation in Scott Ward, Ormskirk is generally of average affluence. Aughton is one of the most well-to-do areas of the Borough, with many large and expensive properties, its affluence being borne out through national statistics on multiple deprivation, average earnings, car ownership, qualifications, etc.

3.8.   Edge Hill University saw significant expansion between 2000 and 2020, and is currently a thriving and popular university with an attractive campus. However, the increase in student numbers has raised issues, most notably a proliferation of houses in multiple occupation in Ormskirk (there are now in the order of 450), leading to a marked change in character in some residential streets, and a much-diminished supply of

affordable or cheaper homes for sale or rent by non-students. More recently, student numbers have stabilised. Coupled with the provision since 2012 of up to 1,000 new purpose-built student bed-spaces on the University campus and in Ormskirk town centre, there are indications that demand for HMOs has lessened recently. Edge Hill University provides a significant boost to the local economy, jobs- and trade-wise (1,830 full time equivalent jobs, including direct and indirect jobs, and jobs supported by student expenditure)[2]. One of the goals of the future planning of the area is the retention of Edge Hill graduates in suitable quality jobs in the Borough.

Edge Hill University Campus

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[2] Edge Hill University, Economic and Social Contribution, Turley, May 2020

4   Burscough

4.1.   Burscough is the third largest settlement in West Lancashire (2011 population of Burscough Parish 9,500), and functions as a 'Key Service Centre', providing a good range of services to surrounding rural areas and a significant area of employment land for a town its size. The settlement and its attractive surrounding rural area are flat, and mostly in agricultural use, although Martin Mere (internationally important wetlands and designated Special Protection Area, and an established tourist attraction) lies 1.5 kilometres (1 mile) north west of Burscough. There is some historical interest in and around Burscough, with the remains of an Augustinian priory, a number of listed buildings and

Leeds-Liverpool Canal, Burscough

Conservation Areas, and the Leeds-Liverpool Canal, which runs east-west through the settlement, with a branch towards Rufford, Tarleton and the River Ribble at the Burscough 'Top Locks' conservation area.

4.2.   Burscough town centre is popular and vibrant with a range of shops including a large supermarket, a sports centre, independent businesses, GP Practices, a well-attended church, GP Practices and a library . It is also home to Burscough Wharf, a unique collection of shops, businesses and other facilities in converted historic buildings adjacent to the Canal. A small retail park, which includes a Booths supermarket, an

Aldi supermarket, a petrol filling station and a number of other shops, is located on the southern edge of the settlement providing out of centre retail. There is also planning permission for some office units on the site. Education-wise, Burscough has a secondary school and several primary schools.

Burscough Wharf

4.3.   Over the past four decades, Burscough has expanded significantly, following a number of sizeable housing developments. The Yew Tree Farm site (75 hectares, south west of Burscough) has been allocated in the current Local Plan for housing and employment uses, as well as some safeguarded land for potential longer-term development.

4.4.   Burscough is reasonably well-connected transport-wise. Two railway routes run through Burscough: from Southport to Wigan / Manchester with a half-hourly service,

and from Ormskirk to Preston with an hourly service. There is no direct connection between the two lines, although the reopening of "the Burscough Curves" has been mooted for a number of years to make this connection. A small number of bus routes serve Burscough, but most are infrequent and do not run in the evenings, meaning that connection by public transport even to nearby Ormskirk can be difficult. The A59 dissects the settlement north-south, and carries heavy traffic at times. The A5209 runs from Burscough towards the M6 and is heavily used, including by HGVs travelling to and from Burscough's employment areas, even though it is not an ideal route due to the nature of the road as it runs through Burscough and the Eastern Parishes.

4.5. Local residents' main infrastructure concerns relate to drainage and flooding. Even though no part of the town of Burscough is within Flood Zone 2 or 3, it can suffer from problems with surface water drainage and sewer flooding at times of extremely heavy rainfall and New Lane WWTW (which serves Burscough, Ormskirk and parts of Scarisbrick and Rufford) and some of the sewers in Burscough are close to capacity. However, United Utilities are working to address the capacity issue at New Lane WWTW and work closely with the Council to ensure that new developments do not make surface water flooding issues worse.

4.6. Burscough as a whole is 'average' in terms of affluence / deprivation, its 'percentage figures' for various indicators being similar to those for West Lancashire as a whole, although there are localised areas within Burscough with higher than average unemployment rates and related deprivation.


Burscough Bridge rail station

5   The Northern Parishes

5.1.   The Northern Parishes in the current Local Plan contain four main villages (Tarleton, Hesketh Bank, Banks and Rufford) within the four parishes of Tarleton, Hesketh-with-Becconsall, North Meols and Rufford respectively.

5.2.   Tarleton is the largest of the villages (population of Tarleton Parish circa 5,600). Located within the village centre are a variety of services, including shops, a library and medical facilities and there is a secondary school serving the whole of the Northern Parishes located in the north of the village. The village benefits from being located on the A59/A565 corridor, with good road access to Ormskirk, Burscough, Rufford, Southport and Preston, although there can be congestion on the 'spine road' through the settlement at peak times as traffic from both Tarleton and Hesketh Bank queues towards the A565 / A59 junction.
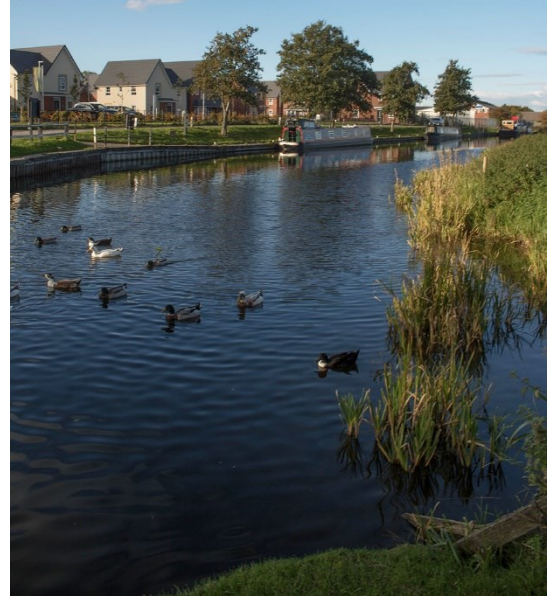
Tarleton

5.3.   Hesketh Bank, the second largest village (population of Hesketh-with-Becconsall Parish circa 4,000), is located directly to the north of Tarleton and effectively forms one linear built-up area with Tarleton on either side of Hesketh Lane / Station Road. The River Douglas / Rufford Branch of the Leeds-Liverpool Canal forms the eastern boundary of the two villages. Hesketh Bank village centre offers some basic services such as a supermarket but looks to the nearby settlement of Tarleton for support regarding services such as secondary education provision and GP Practices. Hesketh Bank in particular has suffered from water supply issues, primarily due to low water pressure if pumps fail or, more commonly, due to the demand from the horticultural businesses in the area. However, United Utilities have been working closely with the

Supermarket, Hesketh Bank

horticultural businesses to rectify this situation. Tidal flood defences have been and will continue to be improved at Hesketh Out Marsh by the setting back of defences further inland, thus creating a large area of saltmarsh.

5.4.   The settlement of Banks is located along the A565 corridor in the north west of the Borough adjacent to Crossens (Sefton). A significant proportion of Banks lies within Flood Zone 3 and is thus treated as being at high risk of flooding from rivers and the

sea. The population of Banks is circa 4,000. The number of services within Banks is limited, meaning residents often rely on facilities in neighbouring Sefton (Southport).

5.5.   Rufford is located along the A59 and has a population of circa 2,000. The village lacks basic facilities with only one small shop, with residents often relying on Burscough for services and facilities. Rufford has a railway station on the Ormskirk to Preston line, but services are sporadic and do not operate on Sundays. Rufford Old Hall is a very valuable heritage asset located within the settlement and adjacent to the Rufford Branch of the Leeds-Liverpool Canal, with a leisure and tourism offer. Mere Sands Wood Nature Reserve lies to the west of Rufford.

Rufford rail station

5.6.   Other smaller settlements within the Northern Parishes include Holmeswood and Mere Brow. The area also contains two large caravan parks, as well as 'Leisure Lakes', a sizeable rural tourist attraction.

5.7.   The Northern Parishes primarily have an employment sector based around agriculture, horticulture and produce packing industries. Hesketh Lane and Station Road (the only road in and out of the north of Tarleton and Hesketh Bank) can become heavily congested with a combination of HGVs accessing packing facilities and local traffic, causing significant issues at peak times. Traditional employment uses have mainly moved out of the Northern Parishes, with two former large industrial sites and a former hospital site being developed for housing.

5.8.   From a nature conservation and landscape perspective, the Northern Parishes have several areas of ecological and landscape value, including the River Douglas corridor, and all but Rufford parish sit on the edge of the Ribble Estuary, which is an internationally protected site for its ecology (primarily migratory birds) and takes up a large part of the north of the Borough. The landscape in and around Rufford Old Hall is designated as an Area of Landscape History of Regional Importance.

6   The Eastern and Southern Parishes

6.1.   The Eastern Parishes in the current Local Plan are formed from ten parishes
(Bickerstaffe, Bispham, Dalton, Hilldale, Lathom, Lathom South, Newburgh, Parbold,
Simonswood and Wrightington) and the rural parts of Up Holland parish. This area
surrounds Skelmersdale to the north, west and south-west. The Eastern Parishes area
can be divided into a 'northern area' including a series of attractive and historic
villages along the Leeds-Liverpool Canal, Southport to Wigan railway and the A5209
amongst the hills rising towards the east of the Borough, and a flatter 'southern area'
between Skelmersdale and Ormskirk and southwards towards Kirkby, generally with
significantly fewer facilities, smaller hamlets, and comprising both intensively-farmed
prime arable land and peat bog. Both offer attractive views across open countryside.
Together, the Eastern and Southern Parishes have a combined population of over
10,000, with the village of Parbold (2011 population circa 2,500) by far the largest of
the settlements.

6.2.   The 'northern area' contains a number of countryside and
recreation assets including the Leeds-Liverpool Canal, the
River Douglas Valley and Fairy Glen and relates more to
Wigan than to Ormskirk, particularly in terms of public
transport, being located along the Southport to Wigan
railway line. Notwithstanding the railway, there is a high
level of car dependency and some dissatisfaction with
access to, and quality of, public transport. Residents have
expressed concerns about the closure of local facilities and
services, although Parbold Library was reprieved of plans
for its closure and continues to serve the local community.
Of all the settlements in the Eastern Parishes, Parbold has
the highest number of services available, including shops,
hospitality, community facilities and a railway station.

Parbold

6.3.   The 'southern area' of the Eastern Parishes contains a
limited number of small hamlets and scattered collections of dwellings and farmsteads
across the whole area. As such, there are very few facilities in this part of the Borough
and few transport services. Simonswood, in the very south-west corner of the area
adjoining Kirkby, has a relatively large and established industrial area (with planning
permission for a further 14 ha of employment land adjacent to it) but there is limited
connection between this and the rest of West Lancashire.

6.4.   Access to affordable housing and specific provision for elderly people are issues of
concern for local people across the Eastern and Southern Parishes. A lack of
accessibility to transport, as well as living alone, can contribute to social isolation.

Inevitably, this is of particular concern for rural areas such as the Eastern and Southern Parishes which are less well served by public transport services and where key services, including health services, are more difficult to reach.

6.5. The Eastern and Southern Parishes are comparatively affluent - all fall within the 40% least deprived neighbourhoods nationally. Parbold ward is within the 10% least deprived neighbourhoods in the country. The highest proportion in the Borough of people with Level 4 qualifications (degree level) or higher is found in Parbold, Newburgh and Wrightington. 46% of residents of Parbold have a degree level qualification compared to an overall figure of 26% of West Lancashire's workforce and 24% of the regional workforce. This is also reflected in the professions of residents: 40% of those living in Newburgh ward are employed at managerial level or in professional occupations; figures for other Eastern and Southern Parishes wards are similar. Many of these residents typically commute out of the area for work, although those patterns may have changed as a result of the recent coronavirus pandemic affecting working styles and locations Around 79% of workers in Newburgh and Parbold travel to work by car.

6.6. Employment-related issues raised during consultation for the previous Local Plan included a desire for a diversified rural economy to help provide more local job opportunities. The shortage of a variety of business premises was one issue that was felt to be holding back the provision of local employment. However, land that has been made available for local employment uses in Appley Bridge has seen limited development or take-up.

Newburgh

6.7. In terms of environmental concerns, the residents of the northern part of this area share a common concern with a large proportion of the rest of the Borough regarding flooding. This is particularly true of the settlements of Appley Bridge and Parbold. There is a wide variety of heritage assets in the Eastern and Southern Parishes area, as well as various areas of ecological value, although none have a national designation.
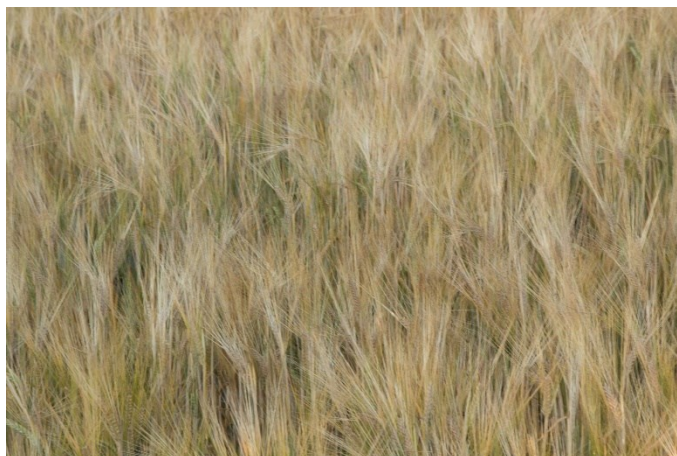
7   The Western Parishes

7.1.   The Western Parishes, as defined in the current Local Plan, contain a number of small villages and hamlets within the parishes of Downholland, Great Altcar, Halsall, and Scarisbrick as well as the rural areas to the west of the built-up areas of Aughton, Ormskirk and Burscough. Their combined population is less than 7,000. The Western Parishes are located within the flat or gently undulating farmland of the 'coastal plain' where large arable fields are lined with hedges and / or ditches and punctuated by small deciduous woodlands and shelterbelts which are important to local wildlife.

7.2.   The area does not have a great deal of service provision and accessing such services (especially by public transport) can be challenging. The area tends to rely upon services within neighbouring Sefton (Southport) or Ormskirk, but the A570 road between these settlements can get congested, particularly at the entrance to Southport at Kew. This lack of access to services can lead to rural isolation for older residents and those on low incomes. In part of the area, there is also a shortage of affordable housing to meet local needs.

7.3.   The Grade 1 Listed Gothic Revival Scarisbrick Hall is a landmark building set within attractive, protected parkland (included on Historic England's Register of Historic Parks and Gardens). As well as being a nationally important example of this style of architecture, it is also an important local heritage asset and the extensive parkland plays a significant role in the cultural landscape, nature value and history of the local area. The complex is also a private school, including primary, secondary and sixth form.

7.4.   The Western Parishes countryside plays host to a number of tourist and leisure related facilities such as Farmer Ted's, Scarisbrick Marina, the Leeds-Liverpool Canal, Haskayne Cutting Nature Reserve and the Cheshire Lines long-distance path, with

other attractions such as Leisure Lakes, Mere Sands Wood Nature Reserve, Windmill Farm and Martin Mere just across Parish boundaries in Tarleton, Rufford and Burscough. The proximity of Martin Mere and the Ribble Estuary (to the north / north west of the Borough) means that, depending on the agricultural practices in any given field, the open fields of the Western Parishes provide valuable feeding habitat to many thousands of migrant wild ducks, geese, waders and swans which over-winter in the area.

7.5.   The Western Parishes contain a very high proportion of prime agricultural land and are an important centre of food production. This can cause conflict with the area's nature status since the intensification of farming practice can pose a threat to the biodiversity value of the land. Significant areas of Grade 1 agricultural land have over recent years been used for turf growing, rather than food production. The western part of the Western Parishes (adjoining the boundary with Southport) is mainly in Flood Zone 2 or 3 and is an area of deep peat deposits which can create difficult ground conditions, limiting the viability or achievability of development, as well as releasing carbon dioxide into the atmosphere when the peat is disturbed. The northern part of Sefton Borough has land constraints, the urban area extending close to, or up to, the [rural] West Lancashire boundary for much of the way from Woodvale to Crossens.

7.6.   The Western Parishes area also contains a significant part of the 'Alt-Crossens' catchment area. This low-lying land is drained by a network of ditches and other watercourses, aided by a series of pumping stations. The Environment Agency has expressed an intention to cease operating five of the 'satellite' pumping stations in future, which could lead to land being waterlogged for significant periods, and would affect the agricultural value of the land as well as transport infrastructure such as the 'moss roads' and the Southport to Wigan and Ormskirk to Preston railway lines. These controversial plans have been postponed until 2023 and discussions are ongoing as to the best way to manage the drainage of the area in the future.

7.7.   Around 30% of residents in the Western Parishes are classed as economically inactive – this category includes retired people, students, non-working parents, sick or disabled people and job-seekers. Of this proportion around two thirds are retired while 10% are classed as sick or disabled. The retired sector of the population is set to increase over the coming decades which may present challenges to service provision in the future. If these groups are to maintain good links to the rest of the community and to vital services, avoiding isolation, then this needs to be positively planned for.

Crop growing, Western Parishes

8   West Lancashire in General

<u>Social & Demographic Matters</u>

8.1.   The population of West Lancashire has been increasing slowly but steadily since 1999. At the 2011 Census the Borough had a population of 110,685, a 2.1% increase from 2001. The latest mid-year estimates of population, for 2020, give the Borough's population as 114,500.

8.2.   The Borough's population is projected to rise to 118,300 by 2043 – a 3.8% increase on its 2018 level, equating to an additional 4,300 residents. The main changes forecast to the age structure are an increase in the proportion of residents aged over 60 and a decrease of those of working age (aged 15-59). The greatest percentage increase predicted is to the age category 75+ with a growth of 64% between 2018 and 2043.

8.3.   The highest numbers of residents are found in the urban areas of Skelmersdale, Ormskirk with Aughton, and Burscough. There is some variation in age structure between settlement areas. The rural areas of the Borough are more attractive to people of middle or retirement age whilst Skelmersdale has a younger, more varied population structure. Ormskirk has a "spike" in the 15-24 age group on account of the presence of Edge Hill University.

8.4.   At the 2011 Census, 96% of West Lancashire residents described themselves as White British. The remaining 4% describing themselves as Mixed, Asian, Black, Chinese or another ethnicity.

8.5.   In the 2015 Indices of Multiple Deprivation (CLG), West Lancashire was ranked 164th out of 326 local authorities in England. This places the Borough in the middle rankings nationally. However, varying levels of deprivation are found within the different settlements / areas of the Borough. Skelmersdale has markedly higher levels of deprivation than the rest of the Borough, with 14 of its 23 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAS) (61%) falling within the worst 20% deprived neighbourhoods nationally. Conversely, some areas of the Borough have some of the lowest levels of deprivation nationally, including Aughton, Ormskirk, Parbold and Tarleton. There is therefore a clear polarisation and inequalities between different areas of the Borough, and this is borne out by the differences in issues identified in the above spatial areas.

8.6.   In the 2011 Census, 88% of West Lancashire residents described their health as 'very good' or 'good' indicating that the majority of residents consider themselves to be in good health. However, results vary at a ward level, with residents from Skelmersdale wards rating their health as less good than residents of Aughton, Hesketh-with-Becconsall and Parbold. Health statistics also indicate significant differences across West Lancashire, including in premature mortality rates between the least and most

deprived areas of the Borough. Reasons for these differences are complex and interrelated, and may include the local environment and economy, mental health issues, and lifestyle factors such as diet and smoking. Life expectancies of men in the most deprived areas of the Borough are almost ten years shorter than those of men in the least deprived areas of the Borough.

8.7.   The Borough's ageing population is likely to create impacts on health, as more people are expected to live longer and spend more years in poorer health. For example, the proportion and numbers of people expected to have dementia are expected to increase and 20% of the population aged over 65 are expected to have problems with their mobility. The lack of access to key services and public transport provision in rural areas, as identified in the Northern, Eastern and Western Parishes sections above, leads to rural isolation and this will only be magnified as the population in those areas get older, adding to the health concerns of an ageing population.

8.8.   26% of West Lancashire's workforce have a degree (or equivalent) or higher, placing West Lancashire on par with the North West and England. However, there are disparities between different parts of the Borough in relation to education and skills and economic activity, with Skelmersdale performing significantly less well than other areas in the Borough.

8.9.   West Lancashire has low levels of recorded crime. Over a 5 year period, reports of offences in West Lancashire have fallen considerably for most common crimes, especially in 2020 – probably as a result of the Covid-19 'lockdowns' meaning fewer people were out of their homes. However, the most recent figures for hospital admissions as a result of violence (presuming violence must relate to a crime, although not all may be reported) show that West Lancashire rates significantly above the national average in this measure, although below the North West average.

8.10. In relation to housing, 85% of the dwelling stock in West Lancashire is privately owned and 13% owned by the local authority. Almost a quarter of all homes (24%) are rented whilst 73% are owner occupied. The rural areas tend to have the most homes owned outright whilst in Skelmersdale almost half of all homes are rented, mainly from the Council. There is limited housing available for rental from registered social landlords (2%) when compared to the North West (11%) and England (8%).

8.11. Between 2001 and 2011, the proportion of households who rented privately increased by 69% whilst the proportion in social rented tenure decreased by 8%. The increase in privately rented homes is largely due to the increase in house prices. The gap between wages and house prices makes it hard for first time buyers to get on the housing ladder and people, particularly young people, are being priced out of home ownership altogether and forced into private renting.

8.12. As with most other areas of the country, housing affordability is an issue for West Lancashire. The average house price in West Lancashire in 2020 stood at £184,950. The median house price in 2020 was 6.2 times the median earnings, higher than the county average (5.4) but below the national average (7.8).

8.13. The government's 2018-based household projections indicate that by 2043, West Lancashire will have 49,000 households, an increase of 5.3% from its 2018 level. (Please note these Projections show what would happen if recent trends were to continue; they are not forecasts.) It is projected that the number of households headed by someone aged over 85 will increase by 106% between 2018 and 2043, and those households headed by someone aged 75-84 will increase by 51% over the same period. Conversely, decreases are expected in the groups of working age households.

8.14. The strength of the housing market varies across the Borough, in broadly the same pattern as is seen with deprivation. There is significant demand to live in most parts of the Borough, although the cost of housing is prohibitive to many. Other aspects of the housing market are artificially inflated by specific demands, such as for relatively cheaper housing in the Ormskirk area, where house prices have been driven up by demand from landlords for properties to convert to HMOs for students.

8.15. Housing is not just about bricks and mortar dwellings, and there is demand in West Lancashire for accommodation in caravans and houseboats, so the need must be considered for these accommodation types, including for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.

8.16. The popularity of self- and custom-build housing has risen in profile in the UK in recent years with TV programmes on the subject boosting interest in, and appetite for, people to build or adapt their own homes. The government has recognised this and the value of developing the self- and custom-build market in the UK to be more in line with Europe and the United States. As such, it is now a policy requirement to make adequate provision of sites to meet the local demand for self- and custom-build.

Economic Matters

8.17. There were 53,900 economically active people in West Lancashire in December 2020 representing an economic activity rate of 76.5% which was lower than both the North West and Great Britain. This is partly explained by the Borough's large student population. A significant proportion of economically inactive people in the Borough have indicated that they want to work. The increasing ageing of West Lancashire's population in the future means that there will be a reduction in the local workforce unless economic inactivity decreases, people choose to work beyond retirement and / or there is additional in migration or in-commuting of those of working age.

8.18. The unemployment rate for the Borough in December 2020 (3.7%) was lower than for the North West and Great Britain which has been a generally consistent trend. Unemployment in the Borough has steadily decreased since September 2012; however, the long term effects of the Covid-19 pandemic upon economic activity are uncertain. Significant geographical variations remain between the different settlements and wards of the Borough with the highest unemployment rates in Skelmersdale.

8.19. The occupations of the Borough's residents are broadly similar to England and Wales. However, there are proportionately less residents employed in the higher skilled occupations (managers, professionals, associate and technical) in West Lancashire than the national average and proportionately greater in the less skilled and unskilled occupations. In the Borough's rural areas, agricultural and horticultural employers (including packaging industries) play an important role, although these often rely upon migrant and seasonal workers.

8.20. West Lancashire has experienced prolonged and steady growth in the total number of indigenous employees from less than 10,000 in 1929 to 50,400 in 2018. The largest numbers of employees in the Borough in 2018 were within the wholesale, retail and repairs, manufacturing, health education (partly due to the presence of Edge Hill University) and accommodation and food services sectors. There was an overall increase of more than 6,000 jobs between 2009 and 2018. However, future prospects for economic growth in West Lancashire are unlikely to be as good in the post-Covid, post-Brexit world due to the local economic structure.

8.21. The Borough is home to a number of international and nationally recognised companies including NSG Group, Co-operative Bank, DHL, Hotter Shoes Huntapac, Asda, Walkers Snack Foods and CRP Subsea. In addition, there are also important local employers such as Edge Hill University, West Lancashire Council and Southport and Ormskirk Hospital NHS Trust. Whilst the Borough contains a number of major employers, in 2020 the vast majority of the 4,520 active enterprises were 'micro' businesses (defined as 0-9 employees) followed by 'small' (10-49 employees). Most traditional employment uses (former use classes B1, B2 and class B8) are located in Skelmersdale, with Burscough and Simonswood also key locations.

8.22. West Lancashire has strong economic links with areas outside the Borough which is reflected by commuter flows. The 2011 Census indicated there was a total outflow of 22,000 commuters with Sefton being the most popular destination, followed by Liverpool and Wigan. Inward commuting flows were 2,200 less, but comprised large numbers from Sefton and Wigan. Skelmersdale remains a significant employment destination. The Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in substantial shift towards

homeworking for employees not primarily reliant upon face to face contact. The permanence of this shift is uncertain and will need to be monitored.

8.23. Ormskirk, Skelmersdale, and to a lesser extent Burscough, are the Borough's main shopping and commercial centres. The retail, commercial leisure and night-time economy offer in West Lancashire remains relatively modest which means that there is significant 'leakage' of expenditure to surrounding areas including Southport, Wigan and Liverpool. This is not so much the case for convenience goods (essentially food) expenditure reflecting the more localised nature of food shopping trips. Town Centres are facing very challenging times and need to evolve their roles, with competition from out-of-centre retail, and the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic accelerating trends towards online shopping.

Transport & Infrastructure

8.24. West Lancashire's geographical location provides good road access to the neighbouring towns of Southport, Preston, St Helens, Wigan and Liverpool. There are also good connections to the wider motorway network via the M58 and M6. However, within the Borough itself there are issues regarding traffic congestion around Ormskirk Town Centre as a result of the one-way system on the A570. There can also be heavy traffic through Burscough, and on the A5209 linking Burscough with the M6 at Shevington.

8.25. Three railway lines run through the Borough, providing a 15-minute frequency electric service from Ormskirk to Liverpool, and diesel services from Ormskirk to Preston, and from Southport to Wigan and Manchester. Up Holland has a station on the Wigan to Kirkby line. Interchanging between these lines within the Borough is possible, but can be difficult. There are regular bus services between Southport and Wigan, which travel via Skelmersdale and Ormskirk; between Ormskirk and Preston (some running via Tarleton); and between Southport and Preston (via Banks). However, public transport services within the remainder of the Borough are generally poor, particularly in the rural areas.

8.26. No infrastructure constraints to development have been identified at these initial stages of plan preparation that would entirely rule out development in an area. This includes water supply and waste water infrastructure, gas and electricity infrastructure and broadband and telecommunications infrastructure. The Council recognises the importance of strong working relationships with infrastructure providers to share information throughout the plan preparation process and to allow an informed decision-making process.

Electric vehicle charging points in a retail development

8.27. Water supply does not currently present an issue for most parts of West Lancashire with the exception of the Northern Parishes where, due to the local topography and demand from the horticultural businesses in the area, the water pressure (and therefore supply) can be affected. United Utilities, the local water and wastewater supplier, has plans to upgrade the Bickerstaffe Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW) and the local borehole source to reduce the reliance on the River Dee supply. Overall, from a water supply perspective, no fundamental issues have been identified in terms of meeting possible levels of growth, but localised upgrading of water supply infrastructure will likely be required to be delivered through any larger developments. Climate change may create water supply issues in the future.

8.28. In terms of waste water treatment, United Utilities are considering solutions to increasing the capacity of New Lane WWTW, which serves Burscough, Ormskirk, Rufford and parts of Scarisbrick, as it is currently close to capacity.

8.29. Within West Lancashire, transport planning is the responsibility of Lancashire County Council. The Lancashire Local Transport Plan (LTP3) 2011-2021 and the West Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan (2014) set out the vision and objectives for future transport in the Borough. These documents outline plans to transform the transport network in West Lancashire, a desired new railway station in Skelmersdale, a Route Management Plan for West Lancashire (including a Movement Strategy for Ormskirk) and improvements to strategic cycle routes, thereby providing opportunities to support road, rail, bus and cycle and pedestrian transport modes. However, it will also be necessary to explore

how to connect residents with service and employment areas, especially in rural areas, given the reduction in bus services across the Borough over recent years.

8.30. The increasing ageing population will inevitably place greater demands on health services and if there is any significant increase in population, this will require additional provision of GPs and other health, community and social care services.

8.31. In relation to education provision, the Education Authority expects there to be sufficient numbers of primary places, and a surplus of secondary school places, up to 2027, which means there are no immediate issues with education provision.

Skelmersdale College

8.32. The Council has a desire to replace the existing leisure facilities in Skelmersdale and Ormskirk and to improve Burscough Sports Centre, and recognises the importance of outdoor sports and recreation facilities, including parks and green space, all the more so in the light of the COVID 19 pandemic. Green infrastructure, and biodiversity sites, need to be protected and where possible improved, whilst maximising opportunities for sustainable access to such sites.

The Natural and Built Environment

8.33. The landscape of West Lancashire is characterised by the largely flat extensive mosslands and wetlands of the Coastal Plain in the west and north of the Borough. The flat and fertile plains provide ideal farmland and the Borough contains a very high proportion of the Grade 1 agricultural land in the North West. In the east of the Borough, the Up Holland ridge, Ashurst Beacon and Parbold Hill offer views over the surrounding countryside, extending as far as North Wales and Cumbria.

8.34. The history of the area as an arable landscape is reflected in the built development. Clustered red brick farm buildings, hamlets, rural villages and historic towns are all present, some of which have been heavily influenced by 20th century modernisation and development. There are also a number of designed landscapes associated with large historic estates, such as Rufford Old and New Hall, Scarisbrick Hall, Lathom Hall, Blythe Hall and Moor Hall.

8.35. There are around 500 listed buildings and 169 locally listed buildings and structures across the Borough. Reflecting the area's agricultural heritage, over 120 of the listed buildings are farmhouses, and many of the remainder are in some way related to agriculture (e.g. barns or agricultural workers' dwellings). There are also 28 conservation areas protecting a varied range of places including agricultural villages, residential parks, and parkland estates of large manor houses, for their historic and/or architectural interest.

Heritage

8.36. The Borough has a sizeable amount of its area covered by nature reserves, with Martin Mere and the Ribble Estuary being the largest two assets, and the latter forming part of the coastal zone. These are recognised as internationally important wetland habitats, particularly important as a winter feeding ground for migratory wetland birds, including pink footed geese. In addition, there a 6 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and a number of local nature reserves.

Martin Mere Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust

8.37. West Lancashire provides important habitats for a number of protected species including many varieties of birds, water voles and great crested newts. There are also a series of major wildlife corridors running through the Borough. In the face of continuing biodiversity loss, it will be increasingly important to protect and enhance the Borough's habitats and biodiversity. Biodiversity Net Gain, emerging through national policy, provides one opportunity for the Borough to deliver improvements to biodiversity.

8.38. As the climate changes, a range of species may shift northwards, and an ecological network of habitats and corridors, allowing the movement of species, will be increasingly important. In more general terms, Climate Change will pose a threat to the social, economic and environmental well-being of the Borough, and it is clear that measures will be needed to adapt to, and mitigate, the climate emergency at a local level.

8.39. At present, carbon dioxide emissions in West Lancashire are high in comparison to other Lancashire authorities and the rate for tonnes per person is above the national level. Emissions are greatest from transport, industry/land use, and domestic energy. Energy consumption is high, against ever-increasing (carbon based) energy costs, with the risk of many residents being in 'fuel poverty' and/or suffering further climate injustices (e.g. social heat vulnerability). With national targets to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050, action is needed at a local level to reduce the Borough's emissions, improve energy efficiency and promote renewable energy with further opportunities to develop a green economy.

Mere Sands Wood (Wildlife Trust)

8.40. Two key waterways in the Borough are the River Douglas located in the east, and the Leeds-Liverpool Canal which bisects the Borough and also branches off to the north at Rufford. Due to the flat topography of the land, large areas within the Northern Parishes (and to a lesser degree the Western Parishes) are located within Flood Zone 3; this puts them at the greatest risk from potential flooding.

8.41. The Government's climate change risk assessment identifies flood risk, and particularly flooding from heavy downpours, as one of the key climate threats for the UK, alongside stresses on water resources, threats to biodiversity and natural habitats. Given the nature of the West Lancashire landscape described above, flooding is likely to be a considerable issue in the Borough in the future.

Your Views

Do you have any comments on the 'Portrait of West Lancashire'?

Issues Affecting West Lancashire

Note: many of these issues are not unique to West Lancashire.

A. By Thematic / Topic Area

Population, health and social inclusion

Ageing population – the Borough's population is increasing steadily but the proportion of people aged over 65 is expected to increase dramatically, whilst the working age population decreases. This is likely to lead to higher demand for provision of housing, services, health care, and appropriate training / jobs for the older population. At the same time, the number of persons able to contribute towards providing such services is decreasing.
Health / Inequalities – there are disparities and inequalities in health, life expectancy, education levels, and job opportunities across the Borough. These are most marked between Skelmersdale and affluent areas such as Aughton, Parbold and Tarleton. Levels of obesity (children) and physical inactivity (adults) in West Lancashire have been higher than the national average.

Housing

Affordability – house prices in West Lancashire are higher than local and regional averages and there is a need for affordable housing in both urban and rural areas.
Specialist needs housing – there is an unequal distribution of house types, sizes, tenures and prices across the Borough. Different demands from different parts of the population (e.g. older people, students, etc.) means a variety of housing needs must be met, including adaptable homes.
Gypsy & Traveller sites – there is a shortage of authorised / suitable accommodation in the Borough for the travelling community, with most current sites unauthorised and in unsuitable locations (e.g. in Flood Zone 3).
Student accommodation – there is a demand for student housing in Ormskirk. The conversion of family homes to houses of multiple occupation (HMOs) has created localised issues for the town. Recent developments of purpose-built student accommodation appear to have lessened the demand for HMOs in the short-term.

Local economy and employment

Inequalities – there are disparities and inequalities across the Borough in terms of education, skills, qualifications, income, and employment opportunities, most notably between Skelmersdale and other parts of the Borough.
Employment opportunities - economically, West Lancashire continues to gradually grow, with a steady ongoing growth in jobs. The Borough has a varied and wide-ranging employment base, including strong agricultural, manufacturing and distribution sectors. But there is a need to support and maintain a wide range of job opportunities, in a wide range of sectors, with a wide range of scales.

Rural economy / diversification – there are issues of isolation, poverty, limited employment opportunities and inadequate transport in rural areas. Broadband provision is less good there than in urban areas. Agricultural, horticultural, and associated businesses play a key role in the local economy but need policies to support and potentially provide sites for such uses. Rural diversification helps support rural economies.

Retail / town centres – town centres suffer 'leakage' of expenditure to neighbouring centres, and increasing vacancy rates. In response to numerous challenges including online retail and the impacts of Covid-19, the Borough's town centres need to reinvent themselves to meet 21st Century preferences for shopping, leisure and entertainment.

Brexit / Covid-19 – the scale and duration of the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit on employment / unemployment are still uncertain. The local economy is more vulnerable to the effects of Brexit than the national average, e.g. on account of the agricultural and food sectors.

Employment land availability – take-up of employment land has not been significant over recent years. This may be due to wider factors (recession, etc.) but may also imply a lack of suitable sites / ranges of sites. There are limited opportunities to redevelop existing industrial estates. There has been pressure in some parts of the Borough for housing on existing employment sites.

Edge Hill University – the University brings economic benefits to the Borough, but has created issues such as housing pressure (HMOs) and traffic congestion at times. There is a desire to attract additional graduate-level jobs to West Lancashire.

Transport

Accessibility – there are varying levels of accessibility to services / facilities / jobs in both urban and rural areas in West Lancashire. Residents without access to private transport are often disadvantaged in terms of access to job opportunities. Rural public transport does not serve all areas, and deficiencies have been worsened by certain bus services being withdrawn.

Traffic congestion – congestion exists in Ormskirk, in particular around the one way system, and at certain times of year (Freshers' week); there are 'blackspots' elsewhere.

Active and sustainable travel – car use is high and public transport use is lower than it could be. Cycling levels in the Borough are low; a less than optimal infrastructure and Ormskirk's one way system are seen as a deterrent to cycling. There is a need to create more connected, walkable communities, planned around people rather than cars, and providing attractive opportunities for regular active travel. Existing sub-standard footpaths and walkways, both urban and rural, need to be renewed and upgraded.

Changes in working patterns – the after-effects of the Covid-19 pandemic may create longer-term changes in travel to work patterns, for example through a continued increase in home working / different working hours.

Rail – Skelmersdale is one of the largest settlements in the country with no rail service. Rail services between Ormskirk and Preston could be improved. Consideration should be given to creating / improving park-and-ride facilities.

Climate change – moving towards net zero carbon emissions will require much better public electric charging infrastructure and higher network grid capacity. As transport is a major contributor to CO_2 emissions in the Borough, sustainable transport needs to be encouraged.

Land Resources

Green Belt – the extensive Green Belt land in the Borough is both an environmental asset and a constraint to the future development of West Lancashire.

Agricultural land - most of the agricultural land in the Borough is a classed within the best and most versatile category, and is a regionally and nationally important resource vital to the high performing agricultural industry in West Lancashire. Loss of such land to development, or from flooding / drought, could impact the local and wider economy, as well as food security.

Land constraints – there remain vacant and previously developed sites in the Borough, although the supply is declining. Viability issues can make it difficult to bring forward some of the remaining brownfield sites in West Lancashire. Other land constraints include natural peat moss / bog, which also has implications for carbon capture / release and climate change.

Cultural heritage and landscape

Heritage assets – A number of West Lancashire's heritage assets may be at risk, threatening local character. Development pressures within Conservation Areas, to Listed Buildings, and within historic landscapes can pose a risk to local character and distinctiveness.

Green Tourism - heritage and landscape are important parts of the Borough's character and tourist economy. They present opportunities to improve health and wellbeing through 'outdoor access'.

Climate emergency, energy and flooding

Improving building efficiencies – most buildings being built now are not fit for 2050 or beyond. New buildings need to be highly energy efficient, accommodate low carbon heating (and, in future, cooling) options, and be resilient to climate change.

Low carbon and renewable energy generation – there is capacity for local renewable energy generation in West Lancashire, but delivery to date has fallen far short of potential. Community energy schemes can provide local areas with lower cost, greener energy.

Peatland – parts of West Lancashire are peatland, where development should be avoided if possible. If not avoidable, the impacts of carbon loss need to be mitigated or offset.

Flooding – some areas of the Borough are located within Flood Zones whilst some other areas are at risk of localised flooding from surface water, groundwater and hydraulic sources. SuDS, which could be incorporated as part of green infrastructure, provide an opportunity to control risk by managing surface water and run-off rates. Conversely, the trend of surfacing front gardens with impermeable material contributes towards increased surface water run-off.

Climate Inequalities – there are inequalities across the Borough relating to Climate Justice (where climate change affects some people more severely or 'unfairly' than others), including those relating to fuel poverty.

Water quality and resources

Water resources – pressures on water resources are likely to increase in the future. The impact of climate change, development, and population increase will make the protection and sustainable management of groundwater and surface water resources an important concern. The Borough has a number of water assets (rivers, aquifers, ponds, the Leeds Liverpool Canal, the Ribble Estuary) that contribute to the local landscape, economy, and biodiversity.

Pressures on supply – in general terms, water supply is, and should continue to be, adequate across the Borough. There are localised areas in the Northern Parishes where mains water pressure is low as a result of draw-offs from the market gardening industry.

There is some restricted capacity in the wastewater network. The Burscough area has some capacity issues within the sewer network.

Biodiversity – some watercourses in West Lancashire are of poor or only reasonable quality, which may adversely affect biodiversity.

Improving water efficiencies – we need to know whether water efficiency measures can be incorporated into developments and new buildings, and the role that sustainable drainage systems can play.

Air quality

Air quality – there is an Air Quality Management Area in central Ormskirk, predominantly on account of pollution from motor vehicles. Elsewhere in West Lancashire, air quality tends not to be a pressing issue, but appropriate measures will be required to ensure this continues in areas where new development is focused.

Biodiversity

Protecting and enhancing biodiversity – development can have direct or indirect impacts on biodiversity, including on sensitive habitats. There is a need to integrate habitat and species restoration and enhancement into development proposals to improve biodiversity, not just to compensate for losses. The forthcoming requirement to deliver 'Biodiversity Net Gain' presents opportunities and will need to be reflected in the Local Plan and planning decisions.

Protected species and sites – West Lancashire contains a number of Protected Species and their habitats; it is important that these continue to be protected as required by law.

Wildlife corridors and networks – the effects of climate change and flooding will be a threat to the Borough's biodiversity in the future. An increase in temperatures will force some species to migrate north. Current inadequate 'ecological networks' make the Borough vulnerable to species loss. Connecting habitats, and protecting and enhancing wildlife corridors is an important priority – particularly in more urban areas of the Borough – to help facilitate species transfer.

Green infrastructure – the Borough contains a wealth of open space and recreational facilities. We need to maximise appropriate access to, and linkages between these assets. Green Infrastructure improvements should not just cover physical infrastructure but also include priorities for enhancing biodiversity.

Tree planting - national recommendations are that tree planting should be accelerated, and that Green Infrastructure be improved.

Accessibility (Local Services and Community Infrastructure)

Rural accessibility – West Lancashire is, in general terms, less 'accessible' than the average Lancashire district, on account of the rural nature of much of the Borough. Many rural areas in the Borough have inadequate access to public transport.
Health – general accessibility, in terms of distance to key services, has decreased over recent years, most likely due to the closure of some rural services (e.g. Post Offices and shops). Access to open space is reasonably adequate although some parts of the Borough lack formal parks or children's play facilities.
Infrastructure – many parts of the Borough suffer from limited infrastructure capacity. Solutions need to be provided so that future development needs can be accommodated.

By Geographical Area:

Skelmersdale with Up Holland:

- Skelmersdale continues to suffer from a negative image; this is considered to have an impact on levels of investment in the town.
- Development of parts of the Skelmersdale area is constrained by former coal workings.
- The town contains deprived areas, having on average poorer health, lower educational attainment, higher unemployment and lower incomes than other parts of West Lancashire.
- Parts of the town are poorly designed and / or in need of regeneration. Regeneration work has started in Skelmersdale town centre but there is plenty more than could be done.
- The town is well located in relation to the strategic road network to benefit from inward investment.
- There are reasonable bus services to neighbouring towns but the town lacks a rail station.

Ormskirk with Aughton:

- Ormskirk town centre, like other centres, is subject to various pressures, most recently Covid. The town centre needs to 'evolve', making the most of its assets, in order to maintain its vitality and viability.
- There are problems with traffic congestion in and around the town centre.
- Edge Hill University, whilst providing significant economic benefits to the town, has impacted upon Ormskirk, in particular with regard to student accommodation (houses in multiple occupation) and, seasonally, traffic congestion.

Burscough:

- Burscough has seen significant housing and employment development over recent years, continuing with Yew Tree Farm and Burscough Industrial Estate. It is important to ensure that that new development integrates well with the existing settlement.

- Burscough's sewerage system is close to capacity and there are concerns amongst residents about surface water drainage and flooding.
- The road system through Burscough can become congested at times, in particular on the A59. There is no direct access to the motorway system from the town.

Northern Parishes:

- Lack of public transport generally, and access to services in Banks and Rufford particularly, leads to rural isolation for some residents, especially those on lower incomes or of an older age.
- The combined impact of the horticultural business (including HGVs) and local residential traffic on Hesketh Lane / Station Road causes congestion at times in Tarleton.
- Virtually the whole of North Meols Parish is within Flood Zones 2 / 3 and so is severely restricted in terms of potential for new development, although the village is well protected by the coastal flood defences.

Eastern and Southern Parishes:

- Lack of services / inadequate services, and access to public transport can lead to rural isolation in parts of the Eastern and Southern Parishes.
- There have been incidents of localised flooding in the northern part of the area.
- Road infrastructure is inadequate for increasing HGV movements.
- Access to housing is an issue – particularly for older people and those in need of affordable housing.

Western Parishes:

- Parts of the Western Parishes area suffer rural isolation and poor access to services.
- Land close to the boundary with Southport is subject to flood risk and has peat deposits.
- The proposed switching off of Alt-Crossens satellite pumps could lead to regular flooding of Grade 1 agricultural land in the future.

Your Views

Have we identified the main planning-related issues in West Lancashire?

Should any be changed?

Should any be removed?

Should any others be added?

(Please provide comments below.)

Vision

West Lancashire in 2040 will be an attractive place that people want to live in, work in, and visit. The Borough will have risen to the challenge of the climate crisis and improved its resilience to climate change.

It will have a wide range of good quality, affordable and energy-efficient housing that preserves the area's character and has positive effects on health, wellbeing, and general quality of life. Residents will feel empowered to support change through the planning process, helping to bring about more inclusive, contented, resilient, healthy and engaged communities.

The Borough will have grown economically but sustainably, creating high quality jobs, attracting new businesses, retaining and enhancing existing businesses, supporting opportunities to improve training and education and to retain skills and talent within the Borough, and so providing an adaptable and prosperous economy.

Infrastructure in West Lancashire will have been improved and focused on the places that need it, whether through new active and 'green' transport options within and into / out of the Borough (such as the proposed Skelmersdale Rail Link), upgraded utilities and communications, greatly expanded low carbon and renewable energy provision, enhanced education, and improved health, community and leisure facilities – all of which will have provided a better and healthier quality of life for those who live in, work in, and visit West Lancashire.

The Borough's three main settlements of Skelmersdale with Up Holland, Ormskirk with Aughton and Burscough will have continued to be the focus for new development. Each town will have built on its individual strengths and all three will have worked together to reduce inequality across the Borough by providing a well-rounded employment base, opportunities for business, the right housing mix and accessible opportunities for leisure and recreation. All three town centres will be more robust, diverse and vibrant, and in Skelmersdale's case regenerated, offering what people need in a mid-21st Century town centre.

In rural areas, villages and hamlets will have retained their rural character whilst acting as focal points for local services and appropriate employment, and for good quality affordable homes. The agricultural and horticultural industry will remain a focus in rural areas, having embraced new technology and nature-friendly practices.

The identity and unique landscape of West Lancashire will continue to be valued, enabling people to enjoy all that it offers. This will include the Borough's historic buildings and character; its wildlife, biodiversity and habitats of international, national and local importance; its regionally and nationally important high grade agricultural land and its network of green spaces and waterways. Martin Mere, the Ribble Estuary and other valuable habitats will be protected. Where there is flood risk, any new developments will have managed that risk appropriately. Tawd Valley and Beacon Country Parks will be green spaces of outstanding recreational and environmental value. Green travel will have become embedded through the development of linear parks and enhancement of the Leeds-Liverpool Canal.

Your Views

Do you have any comments on the proposed Vision for West Lancashire in 2040?
Please set out below anything you think should be changed? (Please bear in mind that the Vision should be achievable through Local Plan policies.)

Objectives

Objective 1: Addressing the Climate Emergency

To work proactively towards making a meaningful contribution to meeting national carbon reduction targets and responding to the Council's Declaration of a Climate Emergency. To promote and prioritise renewable energy and low (and zero) carbon development through greater emphasis on solar power, wind power, ground and air source heat technologies, localised district energy schemes and any other renewable technologies which may emerge, with carbon reduction and air quality as a priority. To reduce climate injustices (including fuel poverty) and ensure new developments are designed to mitigate and be resilient to climate change, including improved water and energy efficiency, protection against flood risk, and appropriate heating / cooling.

Objective 2: Sustainable Communities

To ensure sustainability is a guiding principle within our communities by providing a balanced mix of housing tenures and types, employment opportunities, infrastructure, access to services, transport and digital communications, and a connected and flourishing natural environment, and by working to meet as many as possible of the UN Sustainable Development Goals through planning policies, proposals and decisions.

Objective 3: A Healthy Population

To help improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing of the population of West Lancashire by encouraging a healthier lifestyle through the way that new development is planned and designed, by increasing and improving the network of active travel routes, green spaces, linear parks, allotments, waterways, and sport and recreation spaces across the Borough, and by improving access to health and community facilities. To tackle health inequalities, especially amongst young people, focusing on areas of social deprivation.

Objective 4: Reduced Inequality

To reduce inequality, by planning development and infrastructure with consideration to the more deprived areas of the Borough, and by working to improve social, economic and environmental equalities. To seek to encourage communities to be empowered, engaged, cohesive and diverse, and individuals to be independent for as long as possible.

Objective 5: A High Quality Built Environment

To ensure that new development is designed to a high quality, enhancing the Borough's local distinctiveness, protecting its historic features and settings, and that it is responsive to the climate emergency and the need to protect natural resources, to avoid pollution, and to reduce carbon emissions, ideally to zero.

Objective 6: The Right Mix of Housing

To provide a wide range of housing types and tenures in appropriate locations to meet the wide-ranging needs of West Lancashire's growing population, including affordable housing, accommodation for older people, for students, and for those who live in residential caravans and house boats.

Objective 7: A Vitalized Economy

To provide opportunities for appropriate new development that will see the Borough continue to play an important role within the three City Regions by encouraging businesses to establish themselves in West Lancashire. To be flexible and able to embrace and make the most of ongoing changes in technology and in work practices (e.g. home working).

Objective 8: Vibrant Town and Village Centres

To enable the Borough's town and village Centres to show resilience and to adapt to meet the challenges of online retail, permitted development rules and the effects of COVID-19, and to flourish and build on the vitality and vibrancy so valued at the heart of each community.

Objective 9: Accessible Services

To enable, encourage and plan for greater connectivity to a wide range of services to all parts of the Borough with an emphasis in providing ways of moving across the Borough as an alternative to car travel, making appropriate provision (or re-provision) of new facilities in the most accessible areas, and directing new development to accessible and sustainable locations.

Objective 10: A Flourishing Natural Environment

To improve and make the most of our 'green and pleasant' Borough by protecting and enhancing / aiding the recovery of its natural environment and biodiversity, by creating and improving a network of green spaces, waterways and connecting linear parks, by facilitating the visitor economy, by supporting the agricultural and horticultural industries, and generally enabling rural communities to thrive.

Your Views

What are your views on the proposed Objectives?

Should any be adjusted?

Should any be removed?

Should any others be added?

(Please provide comments below.)

Indicators for Local Plan 2040 Objectives

The indicators set out below are intended to help us measure whether the proposed Local Plan Objectives are being achieved. Some indicators may cover more than one Objective.

Objective	Proposed Indicators (data source in brackets)
Objective 1: Addressing the Climate Emergency To work proactively towards making a meaningful contribution to meeting national carbon reduction targets and responding to the Council's Declaration of a Climate Emergency. To promote and prioritise renewable energy and low (and zero) carbon development through greater emphasis on solar power, wind power, ground and air source heat technologies, localised district energy schemes and any other renewable technologies which may emerge, with carbon reduction and air quality as a priority. To reduce climate injustices (including fuel poverty) and ensure new developments are designed to mitigate and be resilient to climate change, including improved water and energy efficiency, protection against flood risk, and appropriate heating / cooling.	• Per capita reduction in CO_2 emissions in the Local Authority area (Published by BEIS) • Number / Capacity of Renewable energy schemes granted planning permission (or installed) by type (WLBC) • SAP rating of Council dwellings (WLBC) • Number of new dwellings achieving zero carbon (WLBC) • Number of new commercial dwellings achieving BREEAM or comparable standards (WLBC) • Recorded incidents of flooding (LLFA, EA, WLBC) • No. of new permissions granted contrary to LLFA / EA advice on flooding / water quality (WLBC) • No. of new permissions granted that provide water efficiency improvements above national standards (WLBC) • [Measuring the domestic energy efficiency 'Performance gap'] (Developer & WLBC) • Proportion of households fuel poor (Published by BEIS) • Number of Air Quality Management Areas (WLBC)
Objective 2: Sustainable Communities To ensure sustainability is a guiding principle within our communities by providing a balanced mix of housing tenures and types, employment opportunities, infrastructure, access to services, transport and digital communications, and a connected and flourishing natural environment, and by working to meet as many as possible of the UN Sustainable Development Goals through planning policies, proposals and decisions.	• Types and sizes of new dwellings (WLBC) • Gypsy and traveller accommodation (WLBC) • Total number of employee jobs in West Lancashire (Business Register Employment Survey / Lancashire County Council) • Proportion of new developments within 1km of 5 key services (WLBC) • Proportion of new developments within 400m of bus stop / 800m of rail station (WLBC) • Length of new cycleways and other 'greenways' (Linear Parks, etc.) provided / improved (WLBC)

Objective	Proposed Indicators (data source in brackets)
Objective 3: A Healthy Population To help improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing of the population of West Lancashire by encouraging a healthier lifestyle through the way that new development is planned and designed, by increasing and improving the network of active travel routes, green spaces, linear parks, allotments, waterways, and sport and recreation spaces across the Borough, and by improving access to health and community facilities. To tackle health inequalities, especially amongst young people, focusing on areas of social deprivation.	• No. of customers taking part in health improvement facilities (WLBC) • Standardised mortality rates (male and female) (ONS) • Life expectancy at birth / at age 65 (ONS) • % of the population whose health is considered 'good' (ONS Census) • % of the population with limiting long term illness (ONS Census) • Length of new cycleways and other 'greenways' (Linear Parks, etc.) provided / improved.
Objective 4: Reduced Inequality To reduce inequality, by planning development and infrastructure with consideration to the more deprived areas of the Borough, and by working to improve social, economic and environmental equalities. To seek to encourage communities to be empowered, engaged, cohesive and diverse, and individuals to be independent for as long as possible.	• Deprivation rates (Contextual, Indices of MD published by Gov.uk) • Proportion of households fuel poor (Published by BEIS) • 'Attainment 8' scores for 'Key Stage 4' (GCSE) pupils (only available at Lancashire level) • Proportion of population with different level qualifications (ONS) • % of the population educated to degree level or higher (ONS) • Serious acquisitive crime numbers / rates (Police.uk) • Worklessness – proportion of JSA claimants (ONS)
Objective 5: A High Quality Built Environment To ensure that new development is designed to a high quality, enhancing the Borough's local distinctiveness, protecting its historic features and settings, and that it is responsive to the climate emergency and the need to protect natural resources, to avoid pollution, and to reduce carbon emissions, ideally to zero.	• Number of listed buildings / heritage assets lost (WLBC) • Number of listed buildings on 'At Risk Register' (WLBC) • Number of locally listed heritage assets (WLBC) • Area of brownfield land developed for housing / employment (WLBC) • Density of new residential development (WLBC)

Objective	Proposed Indicators (data source in brackets)
Objective 6: The Right Mix of Housing To provide a wide range of housing types and tenures in appropriate locations to meet the wide-ranging needs of West Lancashire's growing population, including affordable housing, accommodation for older people, for students, and for those who live in residential caravans and house boats.	• Annual, average no of net new homes (WLBC) • Five year supply of deliverable housing land (WLBC) • Housing delivery by spatial area (WLBC) • Average house prices (Contextual, DLUHC) • No. / % of affordable dwellings consented / delivered (WLBC) • First homes consented / delivered (WLBC) • No. Self-build / custom build homes delivered (WLBC) • No. of specialist housing units for older people consented / delivered (Class C2 / Class C3) complying with M4(2) (WLBC) • New 'dedicated' student accommodation provided (WLBC) • Gypsy and Traveller accommodation (WLBC) • Proportion of new homes on brownfield (WLBC) • Number of dwellings demolished / lost to non-domestic use (WLBC)
Objective 7: A Vitalized Economy To provide opportunities for appropriate new development that will see the Borough continue to play an important role within the three City Regions by encouraging businesses to establish themselves in West Lancashire. To be flexible and able to embrace and make the most of ongoing changes in technology and in work practices (e.g. home working).	• Amount of new employment land / floorspace developed annually (WLBC) • Amount of new employment floorspace developed in rural areas annually (WLBC) • Employment land developed for non-employment uses (WLBC) • Total number of employee jobs in West Lancashire (Business Register Employment Survey / Lancashire County Council) • Proportion of working age population in employment / unemployed (NOMIS) • Ratio of total jobs to working age population (job density) (NOMIS)
Objective 8: Vibrant Town and Village Centres To enable the Borough's town and village Centres to show resilience and to adapt to meet the challenges of online retail, permitted development rules and the effects of COVID-19, and to flourish and build on the vitality and vibrancy so valued at the heart of each community.	• Percentage of vacant units in Burscough, Ormskirk, Skelmersdale town centres (WLBC) • Net floorspace developed for town centre uses in centres / out of centres (WLBC) • Proportion of ground floor units in Ormskirk town centre in E Class use (WLBC) • Proportion of E Class units in Skelmersdale town centre (WLBC) • Proportion of ground floor units in Burscough town centre in E Class use. (WLBC) • Change in footfall in Ormskirk town centre (WLBC)

Objective	Proposed Indicators (data source in brackets)
Objective 9: Accessible Services To enable, encourage and plan for greater connectivity to a wide range of services to all parts of the Borough with an emphasis in providing ways of moving across the Borough as an alternative to car travel, making appropriate provision (or re-provision) of new facilities in the most accessible areas, and directing new development to accessible and sustainable locations.	• Proportion of new developments within 20 minutes' walk of a settlement / local centre (WLBC) • Proportion of new developments within 400m of bus stop / 800m of rail station (WLBC) • Proportion of new developments in main urban areas (WLBC) • Number of community services (e.g. public houses) lost to residential or employment development (WLBC)
Objective 10: A Flourishing Natural Environment To improve and make the most of our 'green and pleasant' Borough by protecting and enhancing / aiding the recovery of its natural environment and biodiversity, by creating and improving a network of green spaces, waterways and connecting linear parks, by facilitating the visitor economy, by supporting the agricultural and horticultural industries, and generally enabling rural communities to thrive.	• Number of Section 106 Agreements to mitigate harm to biodiversity; (WLBC) • Number of sites protected for their environmental / biodiversity / geodiversity value within the Borough. (LCC) • Number / proportion of planning permissions delivering biodiversity net gain to sites (WBLC) • % of watercourse length within the Borough with good to fair water quality (EA data)

Your Views

What are your views on the proposed indicators?

Should any be adjusted?

Should any be removed?

Should any others be added?

(Please specify which indicator(s) should be added, and for which Objective(s).)

If you suggest a new indicator, please provide the source of information that the Council could use to access the necessary data at a West Lancashire level (or below) and ideally at least annually. If we are unable to access the data, it is most likely the indicator cannot be used.

West Lancashire Local Plan 2023 – 2040

Policies

- **Strategic Policies**
  - Delivering sustainable development
  - Housing and employment land requirements, distribution of development
  - Climate change and environmental sustainability
  - Settlement boundaries, Protected Land and Green Belt
  - Strategic sites

- **Housing and Communities Policies**
  - Whereabouts housing can be located (general policy)
  - Housing site allocations
  - Using land efficiently – 'brownfield' versus 'greenfield' development; housing density
  - Dwelling sizes
  - Affordable housing
  - Housing for older people
  - Custom and self-build housing
  - Accommodation for students
  - Accommodation for caravan and houseboat dwellers
  - Accommodation for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople
  - Temporary agricultural workers' dwellings
  - Principles of 'place-making'
  - Preserving the Borough's heritage
  - Community Facilities

- **Economy and Employment Policies**
  - Employment areas
  - Employment site allocations
  - The rural economy
  - Town centres
  - Education: Edge Hill University, skills and training

- **Environment and Health Policies**
  - Preserving and enhancing the Borough's nature
  - Landscape and land resources
  - Flood risk and water resources
  - Contamination and pollution
  - Air quality
  - Green infrastructure, open space, trees, woodlands and hedgerows:
  - Healthy eating and drinking

- **Transport and Infrastructure Policies**
  - Transport networks and access
  - Parking standards and electric vehicle charging points
  - Digital connectivity
  - Low carbon and renewable energy
  - Energy efficiency in new developments
  - Water efficiency in new residential developments

- **Other Policies**
  - Sequential tests – where they are required and how to do them
  - Viability of development – what the Council will expect
  - Developer contributions

Schedule of proposed preferred and alternative Local Plan policy approaches to be consulted upon in the 'Issues & Options' consultation

Please note that policies ST02 (housing and employment land requirements, and distribution of development around West Lancashire), ST05 (strategic development sites) and policies on housing and employment site allocations will not form part of this consultation.

Please also note that whilst policies ST01 to ST05 are labelled 'strategic policies', there are policies in other sections that are also strategic.

ST01 – DELIVERING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Why is a policy needed?

National planning policy, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, contains a 'presumption in favour of sustainable development', i.e. if a proposed scheme is judged to be 'sustainable' (as defined in the NPPF), it should usually be granted permission. Local plans need to repeat this policy.
We also need to set out which towns and villages in the Borough would be expected to accommodate most development in the future, and which should have the least. This is known as a 'settlement hierarchy'. This should be within an overall general policy at the start of the Plan.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?

Our preferred approach

Set out the settlement hierarchy for the Borough and repeat the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' (as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF))

The settlement hierarchy will be based on the findings and conclusions of the Sustainable Settlement Study 2021. The greatest amount of development, and the greatest range of development would be within the largest settlements at the top end of the hierarchy. (Actual housing numbers and amounts of employment land will be set out in Policy ST02.)

It makes most sense to put new development in places where there is already a good range of facilities, services, and infrastructure. Similarly, it is usually best to have less new development in areas with few services and facilities. (Sometimes new development can help sustain services in rural areas, or can help provide or justify better infrastructure.)

The NPPF presumption in favour of sustainable development is at the centre of national policy and is to be repeated in local plans.

Alternative approaches

Vary the Settlement Hierarchy

The only alternative to this policy would be to vary the settlement hierarchy from that set out within the Sustainable Settlement Study. Any changes could only be minor or else the policy would be out of line with the evidence behind it. Unless major new development could provide a range of services and facilities so that residents of the new 'site' could meet most of their day-to-day needs without having to travel to other settlements, this would not be 'sustainable' development and would go against other good planning principles.

The SA concludes that the more sustainable approach is to follow the settlement hierarchy as set out in the West Lancashire Sustainable Settlement Study 2021.

There is no scope from departing from the NPPF presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Your Views

Do you think we should:

a) **Stick to the 'settlement hierarchy' in the Sustainable Settlement Study, or**
b) **Go for a different approach?**

If you answered (b), what should the different approach be?

Is there anything in our policy approaches that you particularly support (or disagree with)?

Do you have any other comments on this topic?

Links

< West Lancashire Sustainable Settlement Study 2021 >

< National Planning Policy Framework >

< Consultation / policies >

Note – there is no Policy ST02 at this stage (housing and employment land requirements, and distribution of development around West Lancashire)

ST03 – Responding to the Climate Emergency and Creating Environmental Sustainability

> **Why is a policy needed?**
>
> The Government has committed to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050, and national planning policy (NPPF) expects Councils to adopt pro-active strategies to mitigate and adapt to climate change, in line with the Climate Change Act 2008 and Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Section 19). In addition, in 2019, West Lancashire Borough Council declared a Climate Change Emergency, setting out a Vision to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030. In doing so, the Council has recognised the Local Plan as a key delivery mechanism for mitigating and adapting to climate change.
>
> As well as responding to the climate emergency, there are further challenges in relation to reversing biodiversity loss, and the Government has announced a legally binding target to halt the decline of nature by 2030. This will be underpinned by the statutory measures of the Environment Act, including Biodiversity net gain.
>
> There is currently no over-arching strategic policy relating to climate change or environmental sustainability in the current Local Plan. To conform with national legislation and requirements, Local Plans should have climate change and the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment as key parts of their strategic policy.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?

1 NO POVERTY
2 ZERO HUNGER
3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY
8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH
9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES
11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES
12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION
13 CLIMATE ACTION
14 LIFE BELOW WATER
15 LIFE ON LAND

Our preferred approach

Introduce a new strategic policy

This approach would see the introduction of a new strategic policy covering climate change and environmental sustainability. It is expected that the preferred approach would set the overall strategic direction, with detail provided through individual policies.

The policy would help support ambitions to achieve net zero by embedding climate and environmental sustainability considerations at the heart of all development proposals. This could include setting out support for specific measures which could include:

- low carbon and renewable energy generation,
- reducing vehicle emissions
- encouraging a shift away from private car to active and sustainable travel

- improving energy and water efficiencies in new buildings
- maximising opportunities to improve green infrastructure, wildlife habitats and biodiversity net gain, and
- minimising flood risk.

This approach would help to positively mitigate and adapt to climate change, and would support many of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The Council's Sustainability Appraisal considered that this option would be the most practical strategic approach to pursue environmental sustainability.

Alternative approaches

1. <u>Have no strategic policy</u>

This approach would be similar to the current Local Plan - there would be no strategic policy governing climate change and environmental sustainability. It would fail to put the climate and biodiversity emergency at the heart of all development proposals, and would be out of line with national requirements.

2. <u>Introduce a more prescriptive policy</u>

This approach would set detailed requirements through the strategic policy. However, containing all climate change and environmental considerations under one policy would create a very long policy and could detract from the 'strategic' direction.

Your Views

Do you agree that the climate and biodiversity emergency should be central to the Local Plan?

Yes / No
Additional Comments field

Is there anything in our policy approaches that you particularly support (or disagree with)?

Which of our options do you most closely support?

- **A strategic policy**
- **No policy**
- **A more prescriptive policy**
- **Something else (please specify what)**

Do you have any other comments on this topic?

Links

< Draft policy text >

< Evidence >

- < Climate change thematic paper / technical paper >
- < Evidence studies homepage >

< Consultation / Policies home page >

ST04 – SETTLEMENT BOUNDARIES, PROTECTED LAND AND GREEN BELT

Why is a policy needed?

We need to set out what types of development will be allowed within settlements, and what will be allowed in the countryside outside of settlements. Much, but not all, of the rural area in West Lancashire is 'Green Belt', a national policy designation. The other rural land has been called 'Protected Land' in previous Local Plans; we need to look at whether we carry on with the same approach for Protected Land, or whether we change it.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?

Our preferred approach

Set out what will be allowed within and outside of settlement boundaries. On the whole, carry on with the current West Lancashire Local Plan ('WLLP') approach, but relax Protected Land policy a little.

Within settlement boundaries, this policy will allow development as long as it is in line with other Local Plan policies. For example, we would prefer brownfield land (= land that has been built on previously) to be developed before greenfield land (= land that has not been built on previously, and / or land used for horticulture and agricultural buildings). The policy would also require good 'place-making' principles to be followed.

Outside settlement boundaries, land will either be designated as Protected Land or Green Belt. The policy for Protected Land would be similar to the most recent approach (WLLP policy GN1(b)), except that more types of housing will be allowed, including all categories of housing permitted in the Green Belt. Green Belt policy would follow national policy (there is no scope to vary this to any great extent).

It is considered better to continue with the approach we've used in recent years, allowing appropriate new development within towns and villages, and restricting it in the countryside. The proposed changes to Protected Land policy are to make sure it is no more restrictive than Green Belt policy. The Sustainability Appraisal concludes that the preferred approach is more sustainable than the alternative approaches.

Alternative approaches

1. Do away with the Protected Land designation.

Rather than have a countryside designation that is different from Green Belt, remove the Protected Land designation altogether. Current Protected Land would be either be treated as greenfield sites within settlements in the new Local Plan, or it would become Green Belt land. (To become Green Belt land, we would need to demonstrate that the site fulfils at least one of the five 'Green Belt purposes' set out in national policy.)

The advantage of this approach would be to make policy simpler by only having one policy for the countryside. The disadvantages include the threat of losing greenfield land and / or horticultural businesses and jobs (a significant proportion of Protected Land is currently used for horticulture) to more lucrative housing. Much of the Protected Land is either in Flood Zone 3 (around Banks) or is around Tarleton and Hesketh Bank, where road capacity is limited, so it may not be appropriate to build there.

Protect greenfield land within settlement boundaries more strongly.

This alternative approach would make it much more difficult to build on greenfield land within settlement boundaries. There could be a requirement for some sort of 'sequential test' so that greenfield sites can only be built on if it is shown that it is unrealistic or unviable to develop brownfield land sites first. This approach could be followed at the same time as the first alternative, so that former Protected Land sites are less easy to develop.

The advantage of this alternative approach is that it is likely there would be more greenfield land left within settlements, potentially giving health and nature benefits. Disadvantages include a possible stifling of development, and a knock-on need to allocate more land outside settlements to meet housing, etc. needs. Also, it may be very difficult to enforce a policy that gives priority to brownfield land development.

Your Views

What policy approach do you think we should follow within settlements (e.g. allow more, restrict more)? Please explain why.

What balance do you think there needs to be between building on 'brownfield' and 'greenfield' land? How could we make a 'brownfield first' policy work in reality?

For Protected Land, do you think we should

    a) **Continue with the same approach as in the current Local Plan?**

    b) **Relax the policy so it is a little less restrictive than Green Belt policy?**

    c) **Do away with the policy altogether?**

    d) **Do something else (please state what)**

Tick-boxes and space for free text…

| |
| |

Do you have any other comments on this topic?

| |
| |

Links

< [West Lancashire Local Plan](#) >

< [National Planning Policy Framework](#) >

< Consultation / policies >

<u>**Note**</u>

There is no policy ST05 (Strategic Development Sites) at this stage.

Please also note that although policies ST01 to ST05 are labelled 'strategic policies', there are policies in other sections that are also strategic.

HC01 – HOUSING POLICIES (10 policies)

HC01a – WHERE HOUSING CAN GO

Why is a policy needed?

Helping ensure that housing and other accommodation is provided for different people is one of the main roles of a Local Plan. Different people need different kinds of places to live, each with their own characteristics and issues, and so a set of policies are needed on housing. This 'housing policies' section has 10 distinct policies. Some of these may be merged in the final Local Plan, and there will also be at least one additional policy on housing site allocations.

This first policy is a general one, setting out where the Council would normally allow new housing, and where it would be restricted.

In the Delivering Sustainable Development policy < link >, we look at whereabouts in West Lancashire we should have new development, including housing. It is generally accepted that new housing should be allowed within settlements (provided it is appropriate in design and siting, and doesn't undermine other policies). We also need to consider whether we allow the same types / amounts of housing in every settlement, or whether our policies should be more restrictive for smaller villages than for towns and larger villages. In some areas, new housing should not be permitted at all, either because of the characteristics of the land (e.g. a nature conservation site) or because of its location (e.g. isolated areas, far from facilities and services). Much of rural West Lancashire is Green Belt – we need to think carefully about what housing should be allowed there, and also in other countryside.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?

Our preferred approach

Allow housing within settlements outside the Green Belt (as long as it is in accordance with other Local Plan policies), more in the larger towns and less in the smaller villages.

In the Green Belt, only allow housing where national policy permits it. This would include limited affordable housing to meet local needs on 'Rural Exception Sites' adjacent to the edge of certain specified villages. On other non-Green Belt countryside (i.e. Protected Land), allow similar types of housing to those allowed in the Green Belt, as well as limited affordable housing (up to 10 units).

This policy links to the first Strategic Development Policy ('Delivering Sustainable Development') < link > but refers specifically to residential development only, rather than to any kind of development.

The benefits of this approach are that most housing would tend to be built in the larger settlements which have a better range of services and facilities. Smaller settlements would naturally take fewer houses as there are fewer potential sites there. The Sustainability Appraisal concludes that this is the most sustainable of the four suggested approaches. The overall distribution of housing will depend also on where new housing sites are allocated. (This will be done at the next stage of preparing this Local Plan.)

Alternative approaches

1. Continue with the West Lancashire Local Plan ('WLLP') current approach

Allow housing in all non-Green Belt settlements, but with limits on site size for the smallest settlements. In the Green Belt, allow up to 4 affordable dwellings and any other housing permitted by national policy. On Protected Land, only allow limited affordable housing up to 10 units.

This alternative would mean a consistent approach is followed over time (over two Local Plan periods), but it means that Protected Land policy would be more restrictive in some respects than Green Belt policy, and that affordable housing could, in theory, go anywhere in the Green Belt.

2. Be more restrictive than under current WLLP policy

Limit the numbers and / or types of housing in smaller settlements, for example only affordable housing in the smallest non-Green Belt settlements. Allow nothing on Protected Land, and nothing in the Green Belt apart from what national policy permits.

This approach could stifle housing growth in some areas, and could prevent some smaller settlements from growing 'organically'. However, it could also be argued that it would promote more 'sustainable' forms of development by restricting new housing in places with few facilities and services.

3. Be less restrictive than under current WLLP policy

This approach would set no limits on the types or amount of housing allowed within settlements. It would allow housing on 'Protected Land' just like on any other greenfield site, and would allow housing on 'rural exception sites' in the Green Belt. It would also consider all clusters of houses (say 15 or more) in the Green Belt as 'villages', which would mean that 'limited infilling' would be allowed in such places in accordance with national policy.

The advantage of this approach would be extra housing across the Borough, including in rural areas. But this would come at a cost, e.g. in terms of the natural environment, landscape and land resources, and in some places would not represent 'sustainable development'.

Your Views

What do you think is the best approach towards where housing can go, and why?

- **Preferred Approach – housing in settlements, follow national policy in Green Belt, Protected Land to be similar to Green Belt**
- **Alternative 1 – same as in current Local Plan**
- **Alternative 2 – more restrictive**
- **Alternative 3 – less restrictive**
- **Some other approach (please specify)**

What are your views on housing in the Green Belt (for example 'rural exception sites')?

Is there anything in our policy approaches that you particularly support (or disagree with), or do you have any other comments on this topic?

Links

< [West Lancashire Local Plan](#) >

< Consultation / policies >

HC01b – USING LAND EFFICIENTLY

Why is a policy needed?

This policy area looks at how strong a line the Council should take with regard to building on 'brownfield' (previously built-on) sites before 'greenfield' (not previously built-on) sites. [National planning policy](#) encourages a 'brownfield first' approach, but is not very strict. Building on a brownfield site means we should need less greenfield land to meet our needs. Brownfield sites can often be in good locations in settlements, near to facilities. On the other hand, it is often more expensive or more complicated to redevelop brownfield sites, especially where there are issues like contamination. And sometimes brownfield sites can have high nature conservation value.

Housing density is another matter where it is useful to have a policy. National planning policy encourages the 'efficient use of land' including minimum densities in certain areas. But we need to bear in mind that some areas are better suited to higher (or lower) density development than others. The Covid 19 'lockdown' highlighted the desirability of providing adequate gardens and open space, as well as encouraging nature in urban areas; this may affect how we approach densities in future.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?

Our preferred approach

Broadly follow national planning policy

Encourage the development of brownfield sites in preference to greenfield sites wherever possible (in particular for housing), but recognise that the need to ensure schemes are viable is a factor, and recognise that some brownfield sites can have value (e.g. in terms of nature conservation).

For housing density, a minimum density standard would be set, expected to be 30 dwellings per hectare, subject to the characteristics of the site in question. (So lower densities may be allowed on some sites, where judged appropriate.) Higher densities – say 40-50 dwellings per hectare - would be expected on urban sites with good public transport access.

The advantages of this approach include being consistent with national policy, but allowing for some flexibility to suit local circumstances.

Alternative approaches

a) Brownfield land development

1 Have no preference for brownfield land over greenfield land development,

Have no requirement in the Local Plan to try and develop brownfield sites before greenfield sites.

The disadvantage of this approach is that it could lead to brownfield sites being 'left' whilst the more attractive (to developers) greenfield sites are built on. This would be unlikely to help urban regeneration over the Local Plan period, even if more homes are provided overall.

2. Have a more rigorous 'sequential' or even 'phased' approach towards brownfield land development,

Require all suitable brownfield sites within a settlement to be carefully and realistically considered for development first, before allowing greenfield sites to be built on. This approach would need to be in line with national policy requirements on viability, i.e. it may be possible to reject some brownfield sites if it's shown that redeveloping them would be unviable, even if such things as affordable housing requirements, etc. were relaxed.

The advantage of this approach would be an increased likelihood that urban brownfield sites would be redeveloped, hopefully encouraging regeneration and sustainable development. The disadvantage is that housing development could be held back, and the policy even challenged as being unreasonable.

b) Density

1. Require the same housing density for all areas, using the 'standard' 30 dwellings per hectare cited in national advice regardless of a site's location or characteristics. Whilst this would make things simpler, it doesn't reflect the fact that sites can be very different, and that a 'one size fits all' approach is unlikely to be appropriate in terms of density.

2. Push for higher densities on all sites (say a minimum site density of 35 dwellings per hectare) in order to reduce the amount of land needed for building new homes. This option was concluded to be the most sustainable in the Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal. However, it is expected the increase in density would predominantly come at the cost of garden sizes, going against public opinion on the importance of having good private outdoor space, following the first Covid-19 'lockdown'. This approach may require a more relaxed attitude, policy-wise, in terms of allowing off-site open space rather than insisting it be provided as part of a development site.

3. Allow / require lower density development on all sites in order to give people larger garden areas and / or more publicly accessible open space / space for nature (e.g. to fulfil biodiversity net gain requirements). For some sites, have a lower minimum density requirement, or even no minimum density requirement.
Whilst this approach may lead to pleasant developments with large gardens and plenty of open space, it could require a lot more land to meet the Borough's development needs, and could lead to loss of countryside and greenfield land. It may go against the national policy requirement to make effective use of land.

Your Views

Which do you think is the best approach towards building on brownfield and greenfield sites?

Are there any particular brownfield sites that you consider would make good housing sites?

Should we try and use as little 'new' land as possible for housing by requiring high density development, or should we encourage more gardens and open / natural space in new developments and allow for lower densities?

(Please mark on a sliding scale)

Should we vary our density policy in different parts of West Lancashire? Why / why not?

Do you have any other comments on this topic?

Links

< [NPPF](#) >

< Consultation / policies >

HC01c – DWELLING SIZES

Why is a policy needed?

It is most likely that the majority of people aspire to living in a large house. Parents, or parents-to-be, generally prefer each child to have their own bedroom. There is often a desire for a spare room, either for visitors, or for use as a home office (all the more so following the surge in home working as a result of Covid 19). Many developers prefer to build larger, more profitable 'executive' type homes. And a significant number of people are living in properties larger than they need (for example 'empty nesters') and would like to 'downsize' into a smaller property for their later years.

We need an appropriate balance of house sizes in new developments in order to help address local needs. Previous consultation results and the Council's evidence base indicate that in most areas, the greatest unmet need is for smaller dwellings, in particular for 'downsizers' as the general population ages. The mix of housing needed varies by area, based on what already exists there. For example, Skelmersdale has a high proportion of 3 bed properties.

New housing built over the plan period only makes up a small proportion of the overall housing stock. To simply 'balance the supply', the dwelling size mix required could lead to unrealistic policy demands. We also need to take into account the viability of different housing mixes and to 'trade this off' against other desired features (such as adaptable and energy efficient dwellings), and the Community infrastructure Levy. So the mix of new dwelling sizes can only go some way towards balancing the Borough's housing stock, but a policy on this can still help.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?

Our preferred approach

Have a required mix of dwelling sizes for new developments, based on the Council's evidence base* * (i.e. the Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment study, and the Local Plan Viability Assessment).

The mix would specify W% of one-bed, X% of two-bed, Y% of three bed, and Z% of 4+ bed properties, or else a range (say within 10% so, for example 15-25% two-bed properties). The percentages would apply across the whole Borough, as we do not have the evidence base to justify different sub-Borough percentages.

This mix would be the starting point for negotiation when considering housing schemes, but we would allow for variations if the developer provided robust evidence of local housing needs and demand, or if there were other relevant considerations.

The advantage of this approach is that it would help balance the Borough's housing stock and deliver what is needed in the Borough, rather than what is wanted by developers. It would also have an element of flexibility, and was concluded to be the most sustainable option in the Sustainability Appraisal.

Alternative approaches

1. Exercise no control over dwelling sizes

Subject to other policies being satisfied, e.g. on separation distances and residential amenity, let the developers build what they want. This broadly represents the approach so far (although dwelling sizes are 'guided' for affordable housing developments) and would be simpler for developers. However, it would be unlikely to help balance the housing stock in the Borough.

2. Exercise strict control over dwelling sizes

Set out the required proportions of different-sized houses on each site, not allowing for any variation apart from in exceptional circumstances.

Whilst this approach may go the furthest (of the three alternatives) in helping balance the Borough's housing stock, it would not be possible to respond to changing housing needs over time. The policy could be over-onerous and could lead to challenges from developers.

Your Views

What are your views on a policy on dwelling sizes? Should the Local Plan try and influence the size of new homes? Why / why not?

Which of the three approaches would you say is most appropriate?

- **A required housing mix based on the Council's evidence base**
- **No policy on dwelling sizes**
- **A stricter policy on dwelling sizes**

Feel free to give reasons for your answer

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If there were no policy on dwelling sizes, how would you suggest the Borough's housing stock be better balanced?

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Should the Council adopt the [Nationally Described Space Standards](#)? Please give reasons for your answer.

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Links

< Local Plan Evidence Base > (Put a link to the HEDNA if it is approved by 18 November)

< Consultation / policies >

HC01d – AFFORDABLE HOUSING

> **Why is a policy needed?**
>
> The affordability of housing, especially for people wanting to get onto the housing ladder, has been a pressing issue for years, not just in West Lancashire. Affordability is influenced by earnings, debt, mortgage availability, house prices, and housing supply. Evidence has shown that building more properties does not bring prices down, but the market needs influencing in order for properties to be priced at a more affordable level. The standard approach towards providing affordable housing – as used in the current [West Lancashire Local Plan](#) - is to encourage 100% affordable housing schemes, and to require that a percentage of homes in new market housing developments be affordable.
>
> The government revised the definition of affordable housing in 2018 and 2019 to include a wider range of housing types, for example discount market homes. The result is that some types of 'affordable housing' have less of an impact on builders' viability, but are not genuinely affordable for buyers. Tenures such as social rent are more genuinely affordable to the occupier, but have a greater impact on viability. A trade-off is often required between a smaller number of more affordable properties, and a greater number of less affordable properties.
>
> Affordable housing need varies across West Lancashire. In particular, Skelmersdale has different characteristics from the rest of the Borough. Historically, the number of affordable homes delivered has fallen far short of actual needs, although numbers have picked up in the last couple of years. There is a need for a policy in order to try and deliver as many of the right type of affordable homes in West Lancashire as possible.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?
1 NO POVERTY   **10** REDUCED INEQUALITIES   **11** SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES   **16** PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Our preferred approach

Continue the general policy approach followed over recent years in West Lancashire

Support 100% affordable housing schemes, and require that a percentage of homes in developments of 10 or more dwellings be affordable. 100% affordable housing schemes would also be allowed on 'rural exception sites' (see policy HC01a < link >) adjacent to the edge of certain settlements.

The policy would make a distinction between Skelmersdale and other areas (i.e. less affordable housing is required in Skelmersdale) in the light of the Council's evidence base and the general lower viability of development in Skelmersdale.

The policy would aim to procure a mix of affordable housing types (both rented and owned / part-owned) and would follow national policy, for example with regard to First Homes, and the need to ensure viability.

The advantage of this approach is there would be consistency over time, and consistency with national policy.

Alternative approaches

Policy options are constrained by the national requirement to take viability into account. The main options are:

1. Go for the minimum amount of affordable housing

The minimum amount of affordable housing would be 10% on schemes of 10 units and above, as per National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 65. The money 'saved' in this approach would be used for other 'benefits' e.g. 'green' housing features (energy efficiency, or provision of features to aid wildlife), and / or infrastructure.

The advantage of this approach is to improve viability and deliver other benefits; the disadvantage is that fewer affordable homes would be provided.

2. Go for the greatest possible amount of affordable housing

This would be at the expense of other 'good-to-haves', i.e. affordable housing would be the top priority in the 'viability hierarchy' (see policy OT02 < link >).

The advantage of this approach would be that more affordable housing units would be likely to be delivered. The disadvantage would be a likelihood that other 'desirable outcomes' would be less likely.

Your Views

What do you think is the most important type of 'affordable' housing we should provide – please rank the types below (1 – highest priority; 4 – lowest priority)

- **Social rent (properties rented from the Council or a Registered Provider)**
- **Affordable rent / discount market rent (properties rented from a different body, but at a price below the market rent price)**
- **Shared ownership (occupiers pay some rent, and also pay towards purchasing a 'share' of the property)**
- **Low-cost (i.e. discounted) home ownership – homes for sale at below market value. This discount is passed on when the property is sold. This includes 'First Homes'**

Different types of affordable housing cost more (to the developer) to provide. Social rent costs the most to the developer, but is the most affordable to the occupier. Discounted market housing costs least to the developer, but is least affordable to the occupier. Which type should we go for?

- **A smaller number of more affordable 'social rent' properties**
- **A larger number of less affordable 'low-cost ownership' properties**
- **A mix of the two**
- **Vary the requirement site-by-site according to each case's circumstances**

Affordable housing is one of several 'desirables' coming off the back of new housing; there are only so many 'desirables' that can be provided whilst keeping schemes viable. What priority should affordable housing have in relation to:

Energy and water efficiency, and other 'green' measures?	**Greater / less / the same**
Adaptable homes so they can meet different people's needs?	**Greater / less / the same**
Providing an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes?	**Greater / less / the same**

Do you have any other comments on this topic?

Links

< NPPF >

< First Homes > https://www.gov.uk/guidance/first-homes

< Consultation / policies >

HC01e – HOUSING FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Why is a policy needed?

The average age of West Lancashire's population is increasing, and the number of people aged over 75 is projected to grow considerably by 2040. Whilst many people are able to lead active lives in a 'mainstream' property until a very advanced age, other older people require a specialist property, possibly with onsite care, for physical and / or mental health reasons. It is reasonably straightforward to build new homes in such a way that they can be easily adapted to meet the changing needs of an ageing occupant, but harder to 'retrofit' existing properties to make them adaptable. There is a desire for suitable 'downsizer' properties for older people.

Just as older people differ widely in terms of their needs and lifestyles, so the accommodation needs of older people differ widely. A Local Plan policy is considered necessary to set out these different housing needs, and to try and bring about their delivery.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?

Our preferred approach

Support the provision of accommodation suitable for older people in appropriate locations

These 'appropriate locations' would be within settlements, with easy access to services / facilities / public transport. Aim for independent living as a first preference, and for mixed communities, rather than 'enclaves' of older people's housing.

The policy would require that all new properties meet accessibility / adaptability standards as set out in Building Regulation M4(2), and also that a small proportion of dwellings meet Regulation M4(3) (wheelchair accessible dwellings).

The policy would also support the development of care home / extra care accommodation in appropriate locations around the Borough. It would allocate specific sites to provide for a set number of care home bedspaces to meet identified needs.

The advantage of this approach would be to cater for a variety of older people's accommodation needs, in accordance with the Council's evidence base.

Alternative approaches

1. Have no prescriptive policies on provision of housing for older people

There would be no policy for older people's accommodation in the Local Plan, but rather let the market deliver housing for older people as it sees fit. It would be expected that as the population generally ages, demand for housing for older people will increase.

This approach would be less likely to deliver any significant amounts of accommodation suitable for older people, unless the market were to change significantly from now. There is little evidence of suitable properties being delivered 'voluntarily' at present. It is considered there is a need for the market to be influenced by planning policy, at least in the short term.

<u>2. Seek to achieve as much housing as possible for older people</u>

This would be through requirements for adaptable homes on all new dwellings, requiring that a percentage of homes on large new housing sites be designed specifically for older people, and allocating sites for care homes / extra care developments. This is similar to the preferred policy option, but 'stronger'.

The advantage of this option would be a likelihood of more accommodation for older people being delivered, but it is likely to be at the expense of other 'good-to-haves' such as affordable housing, or energy efficiency. As with several aspects of housing policy, there are competing priorities which need to be balanced against one another. These will be looked at in the viability policy < link >

Your Views

How important is it to provide housing for older people, compared with other housing needs?

(Sliding scale: 1 – Least important; 10 – Most important)

Which of the policy options above would you prefer?
- **Support the provision of accommodation suitable for older people in appropriate locations (the 'preferred approach' above)**
- **Have no policy, but let the market deliver such housing where it is desired**
- **A stronger policy**
- **Something else (please specify what this is below)**

In what ways do you think we should try and ensure the provision of housing for older people?
(Free text)

Do you have any other comments on this topic?

Links

< Building Regulations Part M >

< Consultation / policies >

HC01f – CUSTOM AND SELF-BUILD HOUSING

Why is a policy needed?

The government strongly supports the principle of self-build and custom-build housing ('SCB' housing). ('Custom build' is where the occupant chooses the design of all or part of the dwelling and employs someone to build it for them.) This type of housing contributes towards meeting overall housing needs and can lead to innovative design. SCB housing may be classed as 'affordable' in certain instances. If the necessary finance is secured (which is difficult, but possible), a self-build property is usually worth a lot more, once complete, than what the occupant owes for it (i.e. it has good equity).

Local authorities are required to maintain a register of people wanting to build their own property, and to ensure an equivalent number of self-build plots are granted permission over time. The Register can indicate demand for CSB housing and justify the need for policies on providing CSB housing. (True demand is likely to be higher than the numbers on the Register.)

Very little 'true self-build' housing has been delivered in West Lancashire, and no land has been allocated here for such housing. It is considered there is a need for a positive policy to help ensure that CSB plots are provided for sale to help meet demand.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?

Our preferred approach

A specific policy on self- and custom-build housing.

This preferred policy approach would be more positive towards Custom and Self-Build housing than in previous local plans in West Lancashire. It would involve requiring that a percentage of the plots on large housing sites (say 100 units and over) be set aside for Custom and Self-Build housing. These plots would be serviced and offered at a reasonable price on the open market; if not taken up after a specified time, they could revert to general market housing.

In addition, a number of small to medium size sites would be allocated specifically for SCB housing.

On rural exception sites, affordable Self and Custom Build properties would be permitted, subject to conditions. (There are complex considerations in working out how affordable SCB housing ties in with Council procedures on affordable housing so such a policy would require careful thought.)

The advantage of this policy approach is that CSB plots should be guaranteed to be delivered, or at least made available for sale. The disadvantage is that there may be opposition from some developers to having CSB plots on their sites, especially if these plots are not taken up.

Alternative approach

Have no Local Plan policy on Custom and Self-Build housing

The Local Plan would express general support in principle for CSB housing but would have no policy specifically requiring CSB plots to be provided. Instead, this would be left to the market to deliver. This is similar to the current WLLP policy approach.

The disadvantage of this approach is that, based on what has happened over recent years under current policy, it is unlikely to deliver any CSB plots for sale to people on the Council's CSB Register, and the Council could be accused of failing to meet identified CSB needs.

Your Views

Should we have policies for the provision of self- and custom-build housing or just let the market deliver it? Please explain your answer.

If we are to provide self- and custom-build housing, how should our policies seek to do this?

Do you support the following?

- **Requiring a percentage of plots on large allocated housing sites to be made available for CSB housing (Y / N)**
- **Allocating sites specifically for CWB housing (Y / N)**
- **Allowing affordable CWB properties on rural 'exception sites' (Y / N)**

Do you have any other comments on this topic?

Links

< NaCSBA website > https://nacsba.org.uk/

< Consultation / policies >

HC01g – STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

Why is a policy needed?

Edge Hill University in Ormskirk has expanded significantly since 2000 and is a flourishing, successful university. The Council granted planning permission in 2011 for over 700 more rooms on the campus. Since then, several other speculative student accommodation developments have been built or permitted in and around Ormskirk town centre. Together, these appear to have met any increase in demand for student accommodation that has arisen over the past decade.

Student accommodation has also been provided in houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). Over 400 houses in Ormskirk have been converted to HMOs, mostly prior to 2011. This has sometimes led to social cohesion issues in certain streets. The Council introduced restrictions on the spread of

HMOs in 2011 and 2013, limiting the percentage of HMOs to 5, 10 or 15 per cent in different roads in Ormskirk, Aughton and Westhead. This policy has worked well and has generally been popular. Recent anecdotal evidence suggests that demand for HMOs is now waning, with a significant number of unlet rooms.

Edge Hill University has indicated to the Council in representations on the (abandoned) Local Plan Review in 2018 that it is likely to have a need for more accommodation in the medium to longer term. A policy is needed to continue to manage the HMO issue, and to deal with any future increase in demand for student accommodation.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?

Our preferred approach

Continue the current approach towards student HMOs that has been in place since 2012/13 and permit purpose-built student accommodation on the Edge Hill University campus, and on a small number of specific sites in Ormskirk town centre.

This has been considered a generally successful approach. An 'Article 4 Direction' (a legal tool the Council can use in certain circumstances) in Ormskirk, Aughton and Westhead means that planning permission is needed to convert a dwelling house to an HMO in these settlements. Current Local Plan policy < link to WLLP policy RS3 > sets limits on the percentage of properties that can be HMOs in different streets.   The new policy would involve minor alterations to this approach, including reducing the percentage of HMOs permissible on most streets, with some streets set at 0% HMOs.

Student accommodation would be allowed on the University campus (in non-Green Belt areas). It would also be one of the possible permissible uses on a small number of specific 'development opportunity' sites in or adjacent to Ormskirk town centre. These would be subject to conditions on amenity of nearby residents. Elsewhere, student accommodation development would be restricted.

The advantage of this approach is it would allow for a limited amount of additional accommodation, and would continue the current successful policy towards HMOs in Ormskirk. A possible disadvantage is it may be inflexible towards changing needs in the future.

Alternative approaches

1. Have a more relaxed policy approach towards student accommodation than at present in the WLLP.

Remove or lessen controls over the conversion of properties to HMOs (either by revoking the Article 4 Direction currently in place in Ormskirk, Aughton and Westhead, or by increasing the percentage limits in the different streets in this area).

Allow for purpose-built student accommodation developments within most parts of Ormskirk, rather than just on a small number of specific sites.

This approach would allow for more student accommodation, but could cause or worsen issues such as the potential for antisocial behaviour and change in character in some streets, and a shortage of affordable and reasonably-priced housing for families in Ormskirk.

2. Go for a tighter policy approach compared with the current WLLP.

This approach would allow no more HMOs within the Article 4 Direction area of Ormskirk / Aughton and Westhead. The Article 4 Direction could be extended beyond Ormskirk (e.g. to Burscough, Skelmersdale, and even the Northern Parishes [although HMOs in that area are unlikely to be for students]).

The policy would restrict purpose-built student accommodation development to the University campus only (non-Green Belt parts of the Campus) and not allow it in Ormskirk Town Centre.

The disadvantage of this approach would be that there would be very little scope for any more student accommodation and very limited opportunity to respond to any changing needs in future, possibly influencing the long-term prospects for Edge Hill University. An advantage would be a likelihood of more family housing (eventually) being available in Ormskirk and possibly elsewhere.

Your Views

What approach should we take towards HMOs?

- **More relaxed than now**
- **Similar to now**
- **Stricter than now.**

Please explain the reason(s) for your answer.

Where should we allow new purpose-built student accommodation (if needed)?
Please tick all that apply

- **Nowhere**
- **EHU campus**
- **Expansion of EHU campus**
- **As one of several possible uses on a limited number of specified / allocated sites in Ormskirk Town Centre**
- **Anywhere in Ormskirk Town Centre, subject to criteria being satisfied**
- **Anywhere in Ormskirk, subject to criteria being satisfied**
- **Elsewhere (please specify where)**

Do you have any other comments on student accommodation and HMOs?

Links

< WLLP policy RS3 >

< Consultation / policies >

HC01h – CARAVAN AND HOUSEBOAT DWELLERS

Why is a policy needed?

Some people choose to live not in 'bricks and mortar' housing, but in caravans (Gypsies and Travellers are covered in policy HC01i) or on (canal) boats. There are several substantial caravan sites in the Borough, for example at Banks, Scarisbrick and Simonswood, and three canal marinas – two at Rufford and one at Scarisbrick. All of these areas are within the Green Belt, and are subject to Green Belt policy.

The Council's evidence base does not indicate any significant increasing demand for caravan or houseboat accommodation in the Borough that would warrant any new site allocations or the removal of land from the Green Belt for this purpose.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?

| 1 NO POVERTY | 3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING | 11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES | 15 LIFE ON LAND | 16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS |

Our preferred approach

Have no specific policy or site allocations for caravans or houseboats

The Council's evidence base does not indicate any significant / increasing demand for caravan or houseboat accommodation in the Borough that would warrant any new site allocations or the removal of land from the Green Belt for this purpose.

With this in mind, it is considered that the best approach would be to continue with the current WLLP policy approach, i.e. support the rural economy in general, and treat proposals for expansion or enhancement of facilities on their merits, in accordance with 'the usual' policies (e.g. on Green Belt).

Alternative approaches

1. Plan positively for houseboat and residential caravan developments

Have a permissive policy on new or expanded caravan / marina sites, and allocate specific pieces of land for such uses, even taking them out of the Green Belt if necessary / possible, to allow more 'freedom' in their development.

This would improve opportunities for expanding the visitor and tourist economy in West Lancashire, but could come at the expense of encroachment into the countryside. Taking land out of the Green Belt may mean it becomes vulnerable to other types of development that may not be appropriate (or 'sustainable') in such a location, e.g. housing.

2. Plan less positively for caravan / houseboat development

Restrict such uses in the Green Belt in order to preserve its openness, and only permit development where a good number of facilities are close by.

Whilst this would better protect the countryside, it would constrain the visitor and tourist economy.

Your Views

How should we help caravan or boat dwellers meet any additional accommodation needs?

- **Continue as present with no specific policy but let 'market forces' deliver the necessary accommodation**

- **Introduce a policy specifically for caravan and boat-based accommodation? (Note – this will need to be in line with national Green Belt policy.)**

- **Allocate sites for caravan parks (or expansions to existing caravan parks) and / or marinas?**

- **Other (please specify…)**

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Do you have any other comments on this topic?

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Links

< Consultation / policies >

HC01i – GYPSES AND TRAVELLERS & TRAVELLING SHOWPEOPLE

Why is a policy needed?

Providing sites for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople (referred to collectively as 'Travellers' in this policy area) is a controversial matter. Government policy requires local authorities to assess Travellers' needs, and to provide deliverable sites to meet these needs. The needs increase over time as Traveller children grow up and require a pitch / plot of their own. It is often the case that wherever a site is proposed, this is met with strong opposition from those in the surrounding area.

The majority of sites in West Lancashire currently occupied by Travellers are unauthorised. However, a lack of any suitable sites elsewhere means that it is not possible to take effective enforcement action. The sites are mostly long-established and owned by Travellers who have built connections with their local area (for example, through children attending schools). These 'connections' mean that alternative sites for these Travellers should be sought in the same area, rather than elsewhere in the Borough. Whilst there have been complaints and reports of incidents (anecdotally, these have often been perpetrated by temporary visitors to the sites), it is believed that most permanent occupants of the West Lancashire sites have generally behaved reasonably. However, most currently-occupied sites are unsuitable in policy terms in that they are in the Green Belt, and / or on land at risk of flooding.

The Council has tried hard to identify alternative, more suitable, sites for Travellers but has had very little success. Few, if any, landowners are willing to consider the use of their land as a Traveller site; some have expressed a willingness in the past but later changed their minds. In any case, the sites they own have tended to be in unsuitable locations. Council-owned land has been considered, but there appear to be no suitable sites in Council ownership. We have asked neighbouring authorities if they could help meet any of our Travellers' accommodation needs, but have received no positive responses.

National planning policy requires Local Plans to allocate enough deliverable sites to meet identified Traveller accommodation needs, and so a Local Plan policy is needed on this topic.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?

1 NO POVERTY

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

15 LIFE ON LAND

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

Our preferred approach

A hybrid approach – allocate (i.e. authorise) some current sites, allocate land for future sites, and set aside parts of new site allocations for Travellers

Providing accommodation for Travellers in accordance with planning policy (meeting all needs, and in the right places) has proved to be an extremely difficult task over recent years, and there is no clear way forward in terms of policy at present.

It is likely that the preferred policy approach would be a combination of the first three options listed below, i.e.

- Allocate some of the sites where Travellers are currently residing

- Allocate suitable sites to meet the remainder of current needs, and seek to compulsorily purchase the land if that is considered necessary

- Set aside parts of new site allocations for Travellers in areas where there is a need for Traveller accommodation.

The advantage of this approach is that Traveller sites may be achieved through a variety of means, i.e. we are not 'putting all our eggs in one basket'. The disadvantage (and this is a difficulty for all the alternatives) is that it may not be possible to achieve even the individual elements of this policy, including compulsory purchase. Experience to date has shown it is very difficult to reach agreement on where Traveller sites should go. It is possible that even this approach may not meet all identified Traveller accommodation needs.

Alternative approaches

1. Allocate the sites which the Travellers in West Lancashire are currently occupying, or which Travellers own.

This means that there would be no need to move or 'evict' Travellers, and no need to find extra land for immediate needs. However, three of the current sites are in Flood Zone 3 where national policy does not permit caravans, so they could not be allocated. One other site is a temporary site not owned by its occupiers, for which there is no guarantee of long-term security.

2. Allocate sufficient suitable sites to meet identified Traveller needs in areas where Traveller needs exist.

Compulsorily purchase ('CPO') the land if necessary, i.e. if the landowners of chosen sites were opposed to their use for Travellers. However, there is no guarantee of success with this approach. It could possibly lead to a 'Catch 22' situation where the site could not be allocated unless the CPO were guaranteed to succeed (the site must be 'deliverable'), and the CPO could not be granted unless the site were allocated in a local plan.

3. Set aside part of new housing / employment site allocations as Traveller sites.

The thinking behind this approach is that the Council is are doing landowners a favour by allocating their land for development. They in return should be willing to allow a small part of this allocation to be used for Traveller accommodation. Whether this would be the case 'in real life' is not guaranteed.

4. Leave the matter of Traveller site allocation to a future DPD.

This approach was allowed in the WLLP Examination < Link to WLLP Inspector's Report > in 2013, subject to a DPD being prepared speedily. However, the draft DPD was 'withdrawn' in 2016, to be addressed instead in the Local Plan Review, which was itself 'ceased' in 2019. A Local Plan Inspector would most likely be aware of this 'history' and it is improbable such an approach would be permitted again for this new Local Plan.

Your Views

The Council is required by law to meet Travellers' accommodation needs. How can we do this in West Lancashire?

Which policy approach should we take? (Please tick all that apply.) < Allow for multiple 'ticks'. >

- **Allocate the sites which the Travellers in West Lancashire are currently occupying, or which Travellers own.**

- **Allocate sufficient suitable sites to meet identified Traveller needs in areas where Traveller needs exist, using Compulsory Purchase powers if necessary.**

- **Set aside part of new housing / employment site allocations as Traveller sites.**

- **Other (please specify)**

Are there any policy approaches we should avoid taking? Please explain why.

Do you know of any sites (available or otherwise) that would be suitable as small Traveller sites? Please provide details. <Link to a site submission page / allow for downloads of documents here.>

Links

< Planning Policy for Traveller Sites >

< Consultation / policies >

HC01j – TEMPORARY AGRICULTURAL WORKERS

Why is a policy needed?

For many years, temporary (or seasonal) agricultural workers have been employed on farms in West Lancashire. Many of these workers have come from overseas, for example from EU countries. Following 'Brexit', it is unclear whether numbers will decline significantly, but it is considered there is a need for a policy to address the matter of accommodation for such workers, especially if numbers were to remain steady or increase again in the future.

It is likely that accommodation for agricultural workers will need to be in the Green Belt. The openness of the Green Belt should be preserved as much as possible – this can be done by reusing existing buildings, and by ensuring that other accommodation is only in place for a limited time.

A Local Plan policy would be useful to set out the Council's expectations for how suitable accommodation for temporary agricultural workers can be provided.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?

1 NO POVERTY | 2 ZERO HUNGER | 3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING | 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH | 10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES | 15 LIFE ON LAND

Our preferred approach

Continue with a similar policy to the present WLLP approach < Link to WLLP policy RS5 >

Allow for re-use of existing buildings (in settlements and in the countryside, including the Green Belt) to accommodate temporary agricultural workers, provided it complies with other policy.

Allow for non-permanent accommodation subject to certain criteria, e.g. there exists a need, there are no existing buildings that could be used, the site is the most suitable in the area, and the impact is minimised / mitigated.

The advantage of this approach is it would continue with a policy that appears to have been successfully used in West Lancashire over recent years, striking a good balance between providing adequate accommodation and safeguarding rural areas.

Alternative approaches

1. Have a more relaxed policy on this type of accommodation

Allow such accommodation in the countryside and Green Belt with minimal criteria to satisfy. This approach would make it easier for accommodation to be provided, but could lead to more harm to the countryside, especially if permanent buildings were to be permitted.

2. Have no policy

Have no policy at all on accommodation for temporary agricultural workers, but simply rely on national Green Belt / countryside policy in general.

This approach may make it more difficult to deal with planning applications for accommodation as there would be less detail in policy against which to assess them. This could lead either to harmful development being allowed, or no development being allowed, resulting in a shortage of accommodation for temporary agricultural workers.

Your Views

How should we ensure that temporary agricultural workers have places to live?

- **Continue as present, allowing for non-permanent accommodation in the countryside or for buildings to be converted**

- **Have a more relaxed approach. (In what ways should we relax it?)**

- **Have a more stringent approach. (What form would this approach take, and why?)**

Are there any sites in West Lancashire you consider would be suitable for temporary agricultural workers? Please provide details.

<Link to a site submission page / allow for downloads of documents here.>

Do you have any other comments on this topic?

Links

< WLLP policy RS5 > (or, if not possible, a link to WLLP residential development policies)

< Consultation / policies >

HC02 – PLACE-MAKING

> **Why is a policy needed?**
>
> Town and country planning should ideally be about 'place-making', designing neighbourhoods and larger areas so that they work well, are good for people's physical and mental health and wellbeing, and relate well to the natural environment, climate change, and other matters. However, most development is already 'in place' and there are limited opportunities to design new neighbourhoods and settlements from scratch. Nevertheless, it is still worth having a policy that sets out principles for good place-making. These principles can be followed in all developments, with a view to improving areas overall through new development that takes place.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?

Our preferred approach

Have a set of principles for good 'place-making' that should be followed wherever possible, both for new ('greenfield' / large empty site) development, and also for smaller schemes within existing built-up areas or settlements.

The preferred policy approach would be built around the general principles of achieving good design, improving general health and wellbeing, and improving the natural environment. It would include the following principles:

- Make the health of residents / occupiers / visitors / neighbours a primary consideration, with the most sensitive uses located as far from possible from threats to health (e.g. busy roads)
- Design estates, neighbourhoods, and even settlements around people, not motor vehicles, and make them 'dementia-friendly' and 'older people friendly';
- Prioritise 'active travel' (in particular, walking and cycling) for example by footpaths / cycle path connections between neighbourhoods and facilities, giving a significant enough advantage over motor vehicles to encourage modal change for shorter journeys;
- Aim to achieve or contribute towards '20 minute neighbourhoods';
- Have as much 'nature' (green spaces, gardens, trees, water) within easy reach of everyone, to aid physical and mental health and biodiversity, and to mitigate / provide resilience to climate change.

This overarching, general policy would have links with several other policies in the Local Plan and elsewhere, including site allocations. It has strong links to general 'design' policies, with design likely to be a primary consideration in the new planning system proposed by the Government. This option was judged to be the most sustainable in the Sustainability Appraisal.

Alternative approaches

1. Have no policy.

Have no specific place-making policy but rely instead on national policy and relevant elements of other Local Plan policies (e.g. transport policy, or open space policy) and possibly also on a national design guide. Whilst there may be no 'harm' in simply relying on national policy, it is considered better and more beneficial to set out a locally-specific policy in the new Plan, to reflect particular characteristics of West Lancashire.

2. Site-specific development briefs

A similar alternative to the above would be to prepare site-specific development briefs for a number of larger local plan allocations but to have no other specific policy on place-making. Once again, whilst there may be no 'harm' in following such an approach, it is considered better to have a policy that applies across the whole Borough, rather than just to a limited number of new site allocations.

3. Have a stronger policy

Have a similar policy to the preferred approach above, but give it as much strength as is possible within the planning laws we have. For example, the policy could state that if one or more of its elements are not followed, development proposals would be recommended for refusal unless there were compelling reasons why a particular principle could not be followed.

The advantage of such an approach would be to push for good place-making at every opportunity. The disadvantage would be such a policy may not make it through the Local Plan examination, or may be challenged and overruled by other considerations.

Your Views

Which of the approaches do you think we should follow with respect to 'place-making'?

a) **Set of 'place-making' principles to follow**
b) **No policy**
c) **Policy applying only to a few limited sites**
d) **A stronger policy**

Feel free to give reasons for your choice(s)

Which place-making principles do you think are most important?

Is there anything we've missed in the policy? Please use the box below.

Or is there anything that should be taken out of the policy? Why should this be taken out?

Do you have any other comments on this topic?

Links

< Consultation / policies >

POLICY HC03 - HERITAGE

> **Why is a policy needed?**
>
> West Lancashire has a rich and varied history which is documented through the Borough's wide range of heritage assets. Individually and collectively these assets contribute to the enjoyment of life in the Borough and play a key role in shaping local character and identity. West Lancashire has 28 conservation areas, 12 scheduled ancient monuments and around 600 listed buildings. The historic environment makes a positive contribution to the Borough's local distinctiveness and helps define our sense of place.
>
> New development should reflect and draw on the local character and distinctiveness. A Local Plan policy is needed to ensure that high quality design is achieved and that all new development respects the historic environment.

> What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?
>
> **11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES**

Our preferred approach

A policy to preserve and enhance the Borough's Cultural and Heritage Assets

The continued preservation and enhancement of the West Lancashire historic environment is required by National Policy. A local heritage policy would aim to facilitate appropriate new development, and to make the most of opportunities to preserve and enhance the historic environment.

The policy would encourage high quality design and appropriate uses to ensure that poorly executed pastiche design solutions are avoided. Innovative and creative design solutions would be supported, provided they are sensitive and enhance the significance of heritage assets in terms of their architectural design, detailing, scale, massing and use of materials.

Alternative approaches

1. Do not have a heritage policy

This approach would mean we rely on the National Planning Policy Framework < link > to preserve the historic environment from inappropriate development. This may mean we allow more varied development that could affect the Borough's historic environment more than if there were a locally-specific policy.

The disadvantage of this approach is that it would not allow the Local Planning Authority to protect the area's historic environment to the extent the of having a specific heritage policy. This could result in incremental losses to the Borough's historic environment.

2. Have a very prescriptive policy

This approach would seek to significantly control the design of development affecting the Borough's heritage assets. This is not the preferred policy approach as an overly prescriptive approach could restrict innovative and creative design, contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework.

Your Views

What would you say are the main issues relating to West Lancashire's heritage?

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What policy should we have on this subject?

- **The policy outlined above**
- **No policy – rely instead on national policy**
- **A more prescriptive policy**
- **Something else (please specify)**

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Is there anything in our policy approaches that you particularly support or disagree with?

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Do you have any other comments on this topic?

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Links

< Draft Heritage Conservation Strategy (westlancs.gov.uk) >

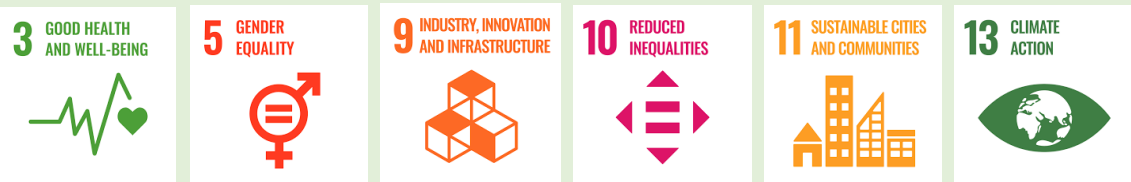< https://www.westlancs.gov.uk/media/98028/spd-design-guide-20081.pdf >

HC04 - COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Why is a policy needed?

Community facilities, like shops, clinics, community centres, health centres and libraries, are essential to support strong, vibrant and healthy local communities with accessible services that reflect local people's needs. New developments can place pressure and demand on existing facilities and/or can lead to the loss of valued facilities and services. Ever-changing needs, demands and technologies will likely place further pressures on our community services.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

5 GENDER EQUALITY

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

13 CLIMATE ACTION

Our preferred approach

A flexible approach to maintain some control over community facilities.

This would enable a flexible approach to let the market and community decide what facilities should be delivered and where, but help control against the unnecessary loss of services. It would make sure new development is in the right locations, whilst resisting the loss of existing facilities. However, this approach would provide the Council with less control over the provision and location of community facilities, and it may also be harder to reduce inequalities across the Borough.

The Council's Sustainability Appraisal considers that, on balance, this option would be the most sustainable approach because of its flexibility to future changing demands.

Alternative approaches

1. Guide development in relation to specific development sites or infrastructure types

This alternative policy would set out in detail which community facilities should be provided or protected in different locations across the Borough. It would involve tighter controls over provision of new community facilities than the preferred policy approach, based on analysis of which services are under-provided for across the Borough, and could better help address inequalities across West Lancashire. However, tighter control would mean it would be more inflexible to changing needs and it may be more appropriate to let the market and community decide requirements.

2. Do nothing to control the provision or loss of community facilities

This approach would let the market and community decide what should be delivered and where. It would not provide any control over community facilities but would simply rely on national policy. This approach would not help reduce inequalities across the Borough.

Your Views

What would you say are the main issues relating to community facilities?

Which of the options do you most closely support?

- **A flexible policy**
- **A prescriptive policy**
- **No policy**
- **Another approach**

You may add comments if you wish

| |
| |

Is there anything in our policy approaches that you particularly support (or disagree with)?

Do you think this approach does enough to provide, or protect, community services? Why / why not?

| |
| |

Do you have any other comments on this topic?

| |
| |

Links

< Draft policy text >

< Evidence and background >

- - <Sustainable Settlements Study >
- - < Thematic Paper >

< Consultation / Policies home page >

POLICY EE01 - PROVIDING AND MANAGING EMPLOYMENT AREAS

> **Why is a policy needed?**
>
> The government says that we need to support economic growth and productivity; providing new land for employment uses of the right amount and type and in the right locations will allow us to plan to meet our future business needs and create jobs. If we don't provide enough new employment land, there is a risk that business needs will not be met which may cause existing businesses in West Lancashire to move to another area, no new businesses to move in and mean that West Lancashire residents would need to travel further afield to find work. Sites will be needed for a range of business needs, from start-ups to medium and large scale enterprises.
>
> The Borough's settlements are surrounded by large areas of Green Belt, much of which is high quality agricultural land, so there is a tension between growing the local economy and protecting the natural environment and 'food security'. There is often also pressure to use existing employment areas for alternative uses such as housing and retail. Such a change may be suitable where an existing premise or use is no longer viable but needs careful consideration where premises and sites remain fit for purpose.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH   **9** INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE   **11** SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Our preferred approach

Update and amend existing Local Plan Policy EC1

The existing policy identifies 3 types of existing employment site (Strategic Employment Sites, Other Significant Employment Sites and Other Existing Employment Areas) indicating the uses that would be allowed within them and the circumstances when their redevelopment would be allowed. In updating the policy, the number of existing employment areas that are protected for traditional employment uses (offices, research, light industry, general industry and storage and distribution) would be reduced. Within these 'core' employment areas permitted change of use from offices, light industry and research uses to other commercial activities, such as shops, would be restricted and general industry and storage and distribution uses would continue to be acceptable. Additional small-scale complementary uses would be permitted in these areas e.g. a cafe.

Outside the 'core' employment areas a wider range of commercial uses would be allowed in line with changes to the national Use Classes Order, meaning that offices, research and light industry would be permitted to change to shops, financial and professional services, food and drink, health centres, nurseries and gyms. Circumstances where these areas could be redeveloped for non-commercial uses e.g. housing would be set out.

Business sectors that it would be desirable for the Borough to diversify towards would be identified. The amount of new employment land in West Lancashire to meet needs would be included as part of a separate policy that deals with strategic employment land allocations.

The benefit of this approach would be to update an established policy as a result of changes to national planning advice and legislation and refine it from local experience. The Council's Sustainability Appraisal indicates that this approach would broadly represent the baseline position and would therefore have a neutral effect in terms of sustainability.

Alternative approaches

<u>1. Update Local Plan Policy EC1: The Economy and Employment Land</u>

The existing policy would be updated in a limited way to reflect the new amount of land needed for employment uses over the time period of the local plan as well as changes to the Use Classes Order which would mean that existing business (offices, light industry and research) uses would be permitted to change to other commercial uses, including shops, financial and professional services, food and drink, health centres, nurseries and gyms. This would recognise that a demand exists for these commercial uses, but they may not be able to afford rents to be able to locate in town centres. The benefit of this approach would be to update an established policy as a result of changes to national planning advice and legislation; the Council's Sustainability Appraisal indicates that this approach would have a neutral effect in terms of sustainability.

<u>2. Zone areas for a wide range of economic activities</u>

This policy approach would zone selected areas, within which there would be limited planning controls in order to encourage business growth akin to the former national Enterprise Zones. This would be the most radical of the options. The benefit of this approach would be to encourage more economic growth but there may be potential disadvantages in terms of environmental considerations as a result of less planning controls. Effects upon environmental considerations could not be precisely identified until the areas to be zoned for limited controls were identified.

Your Views

1. Which of the above approaches is your preference in relation to providing and managing employment areas? (please tick)

a. The Council's Preferred Approach - Update and amend existing Local Plan Policy EC1

b. Alternative Approach no.1 – Update Local Plan Policy EC1

c. Alternative Approach no.2 – Zone areas for a wide range of economic activities

d. Other (please explain and give more details)

2. Is there anything in our preferred approach that you particularly support (or disagree with)?

3. Should existing employment areas no longer be protected for predominantly employment uses (offices, light industry, research and development, general industry, warehousing and closely related employment uses) by allowing a wider range of uses?

Y / N

4. Do you think that new land should be allocated in West Lancashire to meet the employment needs of the Liverpool City Region such as strategic needs for logistics (distribution and warehousing) uses.

Y/ N

5. Do you have any other comments on this topic e.g. are there any issues we've not mentioned?

Links

< Existing Local Plan Policy EC1: The Economy and Employment Land >

< Consultation and the policies 'homepages' >

National Planning Policy Framework, particularly Section 6 Building a strong, competitive economy: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2

West Lancashire Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) (2017/2020)

Liverpool City Region Strategic Housing and Employment Land Market Assessment (SHELMA) (2016)

West Lancashire Strategic Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment

… all of which can be found here: https://www.westlancs.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/the-local-plan/the-local-plan-2038/evidence-base.aspx

West Lancashire Economic Development Strategy 2015-25 which can be found here:

https://www.westlancs.gov.uk/more/regeneration-projects.aspx

POLICY EE02 - DEVELOPING THE RURAL AND VISITOR ECONOMY

Why is a policy needed?

Over 90% of West Lancashire is rural and there is significant rural employment comprising over half of the Borough's companies and 40% of jobs. It includes food production and associated distribution, visitor attractions and local services and community facilities such as shops. Development in rural areas needs to balance economic aspirations with environmental protection. The Borough has the best and most versatile agricultural land in the North West, much of which is Green Belt. Rural areas also contain sites of international and national nature importance. In the west, the Alt Crossens mosslands were drained to create high quality agricultural land.

Our rural areas will face pressures for settlement expansion, an agricultural sector in transition and the implications of Brexit, continued development of renewable energy and the availability, suitability and affordability of business premises. Rural business sites may be subject to various constraints, for example unsuitable roads or lower capability broadband. New and improved technology (such as high speed broadband) will create business opportunities and make rural locations more attractive.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?

Our preferred approach

Less restrictive than Adopted Local Plan Policy EC2: The Rural Economy

Although a little less restrictive than existing Local Plan policy this approach would still promote the protection of the countryside as a result of its Green Belt designation and agricultural land quality. It would seek to protect existing employment, agricultural, tourist and visitor uses in rural areas, subject to those uses remaining viable. A wider definition of employment uses would be used beyond those traditionally referred to (those being offices, industry and warehousing) to include all job-creating uses. There would be specific rural development site allocation(s). The expansion of existing rural businesses would be encouraged providing that they would be of a proportionate scale to their rural setting. The development of the best quality agricultural land would only be permitted where absolutely necessary.

Rural business diversification would be encouraged providing it would be of an appropriate scale. Live-work units would not be dealt with as part of this policy as they could be suitable in all parts of the Borough and not just rural areas. As such, they could be addressed separately.

The advantage of this approach is that it would be similar to the existing Local Plan policy but would allow for a wider variety of employment uses in rural areas which could result in more jobs and an improvement in the rural economy. This would need to be managed to reduce the potential for environmental impacts; nevertheless, this should be achievable and the sustainability appraisal indicates that it is the most sustainable of the options considered.

Alternative approaches

1. Existing Local Plan Policy EC2: The Rural Economy

There would need to be minor amendment to the existing Local Plan policy to reflect that the allocated Greaves Hall Avenue development site now has planning permission and is being developed. The policy seeks to protect the best quality agricultural land, protect existing rural employment sites and re-use existing buildings where they would be left vacant. It allows rural business growth (including agricultural produce, packing and distribution) in certain circumstances and promotes tourism of an appropriate scale. The policy has a wider definition of employment uses than just offices, industry, and warehousing. This approach has the advantage of simplicity in terms of continuing existing policy and supporting economic growth to some extent but is slightly less sustainable than the preferred approach.

2. Increased development in rural areas

Compared to the preferred approach this would entail the allocation of a greater quantity of land in rural areas for employment purposes. This may provide new opportunities for agricultural produce packing and distribution facilities and/ or for rural technology hubs. It would support visitor attractions and larger scale commercial uses, for example larger farm shops. This option has the advantage of promoting more economic growth in rural areas but the disadvantage of potential negative effects upon environmental consideration considered sustainable, but which could be reduced e.g. by allocating extra sites on non-sensitive brownfield land.

Your Views

1. Which of the above approaches is your preference in relation to developing the rural and visitor economy? (please tick)

a. The Council's Preferred Approach - Less restrictive than Adopted Local Plan Policy EC2

b. Alternative Approach no.1 – Existing Local Plan Policy EC2

c. Alternative Approach no.2 – Increased development in rural areas

d. Other (please explain and give more details)

2. Is there anything in our preferred approach that you particularly support (or disagree with)?

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3. Should there be specific land allocation for employment uses in rural areas, for example for the provision of a central rural horticultural distribution centre or for offices of an appropriate scale?

Y / N

4. Should the provision of visitor and tourist facilities, including attractions and accommodation, be promoted in rural areas provided that the distinctive character of the West Lancashire countryside is protected?

Y / N

5. Do you have any other comments on this topic e.g. are there any issues we've not mentioned?

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Links

< Existing Local Plan Policy EC2: The Rural Economy >

< Consultation and the policies 'homepages' >

National Planning Policy Framework, including Sections 6 (Building a strong, competitive economy) and 13 (Protecting Green Belt land): https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2

West Lancashire Economic Development Strategy 2015-25: https://www.westlancs.gov.uk/more/regeneration-projects.aspx

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POLICY EE03 - ADAPTING OUR TOWN AND LOCAL CENTRES

> **Why is a policy needed?**
>
> West Lancashire's town centres comprise Burscough, Ormskirk and Skelmersdale with a number of smaller local centres located within rural villages and suburban areas of Skelmersdale and Ormskirk. Our centres are facing increased challenges from the way that we shop and enjoy our leisure time, including the continued growth of online sales, competition from out of centre shopping and larger town centres in surrounding areas and economic challenges as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.
>
> We need to decide how our centres should develop in the future, including what uses should be allowed, whether more diversity of uses would be beneficial, where new development should take place to meet needs and how they can best serve local communities. Skelmersdale town centre needs improving and has potential development sites to enable this. Ormskirk is a more vibrant centre and has a well-established evening economy, but development sites are more limited. Burscough is the smallest of the Borough's town centres, is divided by the A59 and faces competition from Ringtail Retail Park to the south. Local centres also face increased pressure for changes from retail and service uses to non-commercial use, including residential, which may result in the partial or complete loss of commercial uses in a centre.

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Our preferred approach

One overarching policy for centres, with additional supporting policies for Burscough, Ormskirk and Skelmersdale town centre

An overarching policy would be supported by separate policies for Burscough, Ormskirk and Skelmersdale town centres, outlining a strategy for each centre. An additional separate healthy eating and drinking policy would deal specifically with the circumstances where takeaway and drinking establishment uses would be allowed in centres and in proximity to schools and colleges.

The overarching policy would include the centre hierarchy, establish local requirements for the sequential approach (the order of preference for locating new development, first preference being for town centres) and impact assessments with minor variations from the national norm, the approach towards deciding the uses that would be permitted in centres and the circumstances when new stand-alone local convenience stores would be permitted. There would be a focus upon Skelmersdale to support the regeneration of the town.

The current Local Plan requirement for a minimum of 70% retail uses within the primary shopping area of town centres would be removed as it is no longer relevant given changes to national legislation. Instead, proposals for new uses within centres would be considered in relation to their overall contribution towards commercial activity such as being open for at least part of the day and whether the use would be one typically found in a town centre etc.

This approach would have benefits in that it would update existing Local Plan policy to reflect changes in national legislation whilst providing greater detail by than currently exists by having an individual policy approach for each of the Borough's 3 town centres. The potential disadvantage would be conflict between the overarching policy and the individual approaches for each of the town centres; however, careful drafting of content should ensure that this would not arise.

Alternative approaches

1. Minimal changes to existing Local Plan Policy IF1: Maintaining Vibrant Town and Local Centres

This would be a single policy with no separate policies for Burscough, Ormskirk and Skelmersdale town centres and no supporting healthy eating policy. It would entail basic minimum amendments to existing Local Plan Policy IF1 in the form of the removal of the current requirement for a minimum of 70% retail uses within the primary shopping area of town centres due to changes to national legislation. The policy would deal with the centre hierarchy, the requirements for sequential and impact assessments and permitted uses in centres.

The advantage of minimal changes would be simplicity of approach; the disadvantage would be a potential lack of policy detail in relation to the specific circumstances of each town centre.

2. One single general policy in relation to centres and appropriate uses with no additional and separate policies for Burscough, Ormskirk, and Skelmersdale town centres

This would be similar to the preferred approach above except there would be no separate policies for Burscough, Ormskirk and Skelmersdale town centres and no separate healthy eating and drinking policy. Changes to the policy would be more than the basic minimum of alternative option 1 above.

The advantages and disadvantages of this approach would be similar to alternative approach no.1.

<u>3. One overarching policy in relation to centres and appropriate uses with additional supporting policies for Burscough, Ormskirk and Skelmersdale town centre</u>

Again, this would be similar to the preferred approach, including separate policies for Burscough, Ormskirk and Skelmersdale town centres but without a separate healthy eating and drinking policy, with these matters being covered in the overarching policy.

The advantages and disadvantages of this approach would be similar to the preferred approach with the inclusion of healthy eating and drinking policy considerations in the overarching town centre policy being more a matter of presentation as local plan policies need to be read as a whole.

Your Views

1. Which of the above approaches is your preference in relation to adapting our town and local centres? (please tick)

a. The Council's Preferred Approach - One overarching policy for centres, with additional supporting policies for Burscough, Ormskirk and Skelmersdale town centre. An additional separate healthy eating and drinking policy

b. Alternative Approach no.1 – Minimal changes to existing Local Plan Policy IF1

c. Alternative Approach no.2 – One single general policy in relation to centres and appropriate uses with no additional and separate policies for Burscough, Ormskirk, and Skelmersdale town centres

d. Alternative Approach no.3 - One overarching policy in relation to centres and appropriate uses, including healthy eating and drinking considerations, with additional supporting policies for Burscough, Ormskirk and Skelmersdale town centre.

e. Other (please explain and give more details)

2. Is there anything in our preferred approach that you particularly support (or disagree with)?

3. Are there any particular issues in relation to Burscough, Ormskirk and Skelmersdale town centres that need to be addressed by policy? (please describe the matter and relate it to a particular centre)

4. Should uses permitted West Lancashire's centres be widened to allow more non-retail activities provided that street frontages remain in active use?

Y / N

5. Do you have any other comments on this topic e.g. are there any issues we've not mentioned?

Links

< Existing Local Plan Policy IF1: Maintaining Vibrant Town and Local Centres >

< Consultation and the policies 'homepages' >

West Lancashire Retail and Leisure Study (June 2018) which can be found here:
https://www.westlancs.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/the-local-plan/the-local-plan-2038/evidence-base.aspx

Ormskirk Town Centre Strategy 2015-20 which can be found here:
https://www.westlancs.gov.uk/more/regeneration-projects.aspx

POLICY AREA EE04 - SKILLS AND EDUCATION

Why is a policy / policies needed?

The West Lancashire economy has performed well historically; however, there are differences across the Borough in terms of people's education, skills and qualifications and consequently in terms of income, and employment prospects. These are particularly noticeable between Skelmersdale and other areas of the Borough and means that some of our residents will miss out on economic benefits without positive actions to improve their life chances.

The Borough has an ageing population and therefore less economically active people as a result of retirements; however, this is happening at the same time as an increase in the demand for skills from employers so there may not be enough workers in the Borough to occupy jobs. Skill levels need raising to match employers needs and the Council can work with local businesses and education providers to help raise educational attainment and enhance training.

Edge Hill University and West Lancashire College are excellent educational establishments and Edge Hill is a major asset for our Borough in terms of its economic contribution and supply of highly skilled graduates. The University has enjoyed success and growth; however, its expansion has had other effects, in particular on Ormskirk, in terms of traffic and accommodation.

Local schools also have a key role to play in helping young people benefit from opportunities in the labour market. There are also advantages from lifelong learning which would allow residents to reskill during their working lives to meet changing business needs.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?

Please note there are 2 preferred policy approaches below, A and B, each dealing with different aspects of this topic area.

Our preferred approach A: Edge Hill University Campus

A policy for the future development of Edge Hill University campus

The continued development and improvement of Edge Hill University campus and its facilities would be supported, including new purpose built student residential accommodation. The campus boundary would be shown on the Local Plan Policies Map. Any growth of the University beyond the existing campus would be either close by to the south of St Helens Road or within Ormskirk town centre. Travel plans and parking strategies would be required to encourage sustainable travel, improve access to the campus and alleviate existing or new traffic impacts.

Links between the University and local businesses would be encouraged in terms of information sharing and learning programmes and benefits to more deprived local communities would be sought.

A companion policy would address the issue of off-campus student accommodation in the form of Houses in Multiple Occupation (dealt with under the Housing topic).

The advantages of this approach would be to continue and update the approach taken by the existing Local Plan and the only disadvantage may be the campus expanding onto a greenfield site. The Sustainability Appraisal indicates this approach, along with alternative no.4, would be the most sustainable.

Alternative approaches A

1. To not have any policy for the University campus
Future development of the University would not be guided by a site specific policy meaning that development would be more likely to take place away from the existing campus. Whilst this would be a simple approach, the disadvantage would be that future development on campus may also be less able to be managed in terms of mix and quality.

2. A more detailed policy or masterplan for the University campus
This would tightly control what is developed on-campus and where. The disadvantage of this approach is that it may reduce the flexibility for the University to respond to changing demands within the higher education sector.

3. A different location for the expansion of the University campus
This approach would envisage the creation of a satellite campus elsewhere in Ormskirk or further afield in West Lancashire rather than expanding within or close to the existing campus. This is understood to not be the University's preference. It would have a mixture of positive benefits (potentially spreading economic benefits beyond Ormskirk) and disadvantages (accommodation pressures on Ormskirk as it would be less likely to provide the same amount of purpose built student accommodation and transport issues by creating additional movement of students between the main campus and satellite campus) as well as uncertainty around the location of any satellite campus.

4. A policy to deal with the future of Edge Hill University and selected other education sites
The policy could be expanded beyond the preferred approach to also include selected education facilities below higher education level (schools and colleges) and provide a broad policy framework for their future development. Whilst this would be a comprehensive approach it would be challenging both in terms of the scope of which education facilities to include or exclude and the flexibility a policy framework would require to deal with a range of different sites effectively.

Your Views approach A: Edge Hill University Campus

1. Which of the above approaches is your preference in relation to Edge Hill University Campus? (please tick)

a. The Council's Preferred Approach – A policy for the future development of Edge Hill University campus

b. Alternative Approach no.1 – To not have any policy for the University campus

c. Alternative Approach no.2 – A more detailed policy or masterplan for the University campus

d. Alternative Approach no.3 - A different location for the expansion of the University campus

e. Alternative Approach no.4 - A policy to deal with the future of Edge Hill University and selected other education sites

f. Other (please explain and give more details)

2. Is there anything in our preferred approach that you particularly support (or disagree with)?

3. Do you have any other comments on this topic e.g. are there any issues we've not mentioned?

Our preferred approach B: Skills and Training

A skills and training policy

The employment of local people and use of local businesses during the construction and implementation stages of major development proposals would be promoted. Planning applications for major development would be expected to produce an employment and skills plan identifying opportunities for the employment and up-skilling of local people during the implementation phase.

The advantage of this approach would be to increase the benefits from new development and potentially assist in reducing inequalities.

Alternative approach B

1. Not to have a skills and training policy

The advantage of this approach is simplicity by not placing additional requirements upon major development but the disadvantage would be to reduce opportunities for skills training.

Your Views approach B: Skills and Training

1. Which of the above approaches is your preference in relation to skills and training? (please tick)

a. The Council's Preferred Approach – A skills and training policy

b. Alternative Approach no.1 – Not to have a skills and training policy

2. Is there anything in our preferred approach that you particularly support (or disagree with)?

3. Do you have any other comments on this topic e.g. are there any issues we've not mentioned?

Links

< Existing Local Plan Policy EC4: Edge Hill University >

< Consultation and the policies 'homepages' >

West Lancashire Economic Development Strategy 2015-25, a copy of which can be found here:

https://www.westlancs.gov.uk/business/business-advice-and-support/the-local-economy.aspx

POLICY EH01 - NATURE

Why is a policy needed?

West Lancashire is predominantly rural, with an array of natural assets including green spaces, landscapes and land resources. The area is home to a number of protected habitats (some of international importance) and species. These will all benefit from a Local Plan policy based solely on the conservation and enhancing of nature and the Borough's biodiversity. We also need a local policy to set out how we implement the Government's expected new requirements on 'biodiversity net gain' and 'nature recovery strategies' in West Lancashire.

The protection of our natural assets will help ensure that West Lancashire retains its high-quality environment which provides amenity space for its residents and improves health and wellbeing, as well as helping species that move well beyond West Lancashire.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?

Our preferred approach

The policy will continue the approach of the existing Local Plan Policy EN2: Preserving and Enhancing West Lancashire's Natural Environment, including parts 1 (Nature Conservation Site and Ecological Networks and 2 (Priority Species and Habitats) < link >. This will include the requirement to secure a 10% increase in biodiversity as per the National Planning Policy and the soon-to-be published Environment Bill <Link>

This policy will seek to protect and safeguard all sites of international, national and local level importance. Where development is proposed within a Nature Conservation Area, this policy will seek to ensure that there is no harm to the area and that where development is considered to be necessary, mitigation measures are secured.

The biodiversity resources of the Plan Area and its surroundings will be conserved and where possible enhanced by ensuring that development proposals will not result in significant harm to biodiversity interests. The Ecological Networks which are currently in place within the borough, linking areas of West Lancashire to networks within neighbouring areas are likely to be replaced as the Lancashire Local Nature Partnership takes form. However as this has not yet been created, the policy will continue to protect the existing Ecological Networks. <Link>

With regard to Biodiversity Net Gain, the policy will be in line with the requirements to be stipulated within the Environment Bill when it is published towards the end of 2021. The requirement to secure at least a 10% biodiversity net gain for new development on site where possible, or on designated sites within the wider borough/county.

Alternative approaches

1. Require a 20% Net Gain requirement within policy for new development

The draft Environment Bill requires a national minimum net gain in biodiversity of 10% for new development, with the use of the DEFRA metric(s) <Link> to identify the level of existing biodiversity on the site. To produce a policy which requires a 20% goal, appropriate evidence to support this need

would be required. If sufficient evidence becomes available to support the requirement of 20% prior to the adoption of the Local Plan, the policy approach may change to reflect his.

The advantages of this policy approach would secure a greater level of net gains in terms of biodiversity for the borough, in turn improving the quality of the natural environment. Whilst it would be beneficial to secure a 20% net gain on developments, at the current time required evidence is not yet available and therefore a requirement for above the 10% minimum as stipulated by the draft Environment Bill is the preferred policy approach.

2. Creation of a specific Biodiversity Net Gain Policy

The creation of a specific Biodiversity Net Gain policy would result in a more prescriptive approach, which at this current time could hinder innovative design and development, as the Environment Bill has not yet been published.

There would be balanced advantages and disadvantages from this policy approach as whilst it would potentially provide guidance for developers regarding the provision of Biodiversity Net Gains, due to the lack of National Legislation in place it could potentially hinder innovative design and development, which is contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework.

Your Views

1. Which of the above approaches is your preference in relation to the Boroughs Nature? (please tick)

a. Continue the approach of the existing Local Plan Policy EN2: Preserving and Enhancing West Lancashire's Natural Environment, including parts 1 (Nature Conservation Site and Ecological Networks and 2 (Priority Species and Habitats).

☐

b. Alternative 1 – Require a 20% Net Gain requirement within policy for new development

☐

c. Alternative 2 – Create a specific Biodiversity Net Gain Policy

☐

What would you say are the main issues relating to nature in West Lancashire?

☐

Is there anything in our policy approaches that you particularly support / disagree with?

☐

Do you agree with following the national minimum requirement for 10% Biodiversity Net Gain or should we go for a higher figure?

☐

Do you have any other comments on this topic?

☐

Links

< [LERN - the Lancashire Environment Record Network - Lancashire County Council](#)>

< [Environment Bill - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament](#) >

< [The Biodiversity Metric 3.0 - JP039 (naturalengland.org.uk)](#) >

POLICY EH02 – PRESERVING AND ENHANCING THE BOROUGH'S LANDSCAPE / LAND RESOURCES

Why is a policy needed?

National guidance says that we need to recognise the character and beauty of the countryside. West Lancashire's predominantly rural landscape is a mixture of mosslands in the north, west and south, a coastal plain in the centre of the Borough, farmed ridges in the east, and flat, open coastal marshes on the Ribble Estuary. The Borough's settlements are set within this landscape and it is this local distinctiveness that makes West Lancashire an attractive location for visitors.

Much of the Borough's rural landscape is Green Belt which contains high quality soils, supporting the best and most versatile agricultural land in the North-West and amongst the best nationally. Our land also contains a variety of other natural resources which need to be used sustainably and may need to be preserved. It is also a resource to accommodate future development so a policy is required to balance these needs with being sympathetic to landscape character and environmental factors and help decide where development should take place.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?

2 ZERO HUNGER   11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES   12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION   14 LIFE BELOW WATER

Our preferred approach

Continue the approach of existing Local Plan Policy EN2: Preserving and Enhancing West Lancashire's Natural Environment, including Parts 4 (Land Resources), 5 (Coastal Zone) and 6 (Landscape Character) < Link >

This could be either part of a new stand-alone policy or incorporated within another policy. It would have a restrictive approach to new development taking place on the best quality agricultural land (grades 1, 2 and 3a) and would limit uses with the designated Coastal Zones shown on the Local Plan Policies Map < link > to the essential needs of coastal navigation, recreation, tourism and leisure, flood protection, fisheries, nature conservation and / or agriculture. It would require minor amendment to the existing policy to reflect the Marine Management Organisation's North West Marine Plan < link > and be clearer when referring to key landscape features e.g. geological features.

New development would be permitted (subject to compliance with other LP policies) where it is sensitively designed and makes a positive contribution to landscapes as defined by the Council's existing Natural Areas and Areas of Landscape History Importance Supplementary Planning Guidance < link > . This would reflect the existing policy approach so would be neutral in terms of sustainability and would have the advantage of continuing an existing policy which has been working satisfactorily.

Alternative approaches

1. Similar to option 1 (parts of existing Policy EN2)

This approach would be similar to the preferred policy approach but would remove the Coastal Zone designation from both the Local Plan Policies Map and the policy i.e. remove Part 5 of existing Local Plan Policy EN2. The advantage of this approach would be a simpler policy, with reliance upon the North West Marine Plan in relation to coastal areas; the disadvantage would be not clearly identifying coastal areas on the Local Plan Policies Map where there would be limitations on development permitted.

2. A less restrictive approach than existing Local Plan Policy EN2 Parts 4, 5 and 6

This approach would be more pro-development on sites which are of the best agricultural quality (grades 1, 2 and 3a). This could be done either on its own or in combination with the removal of the Coastal Zone designation from the policy (alternative option 1 above). There would be balanced advantages and disadvantages from such an approach (social and economic benefits from greater development compared to environmental considerations).

3. A more prescriptive approach than existing Local Plan Policy EN2 Parts 4, 5 and 6

The policy would require specific mitigation measures to help reduce the impact of a development proposal upon landscape history / character, and would require compensation measures where a development proposal would cause harm to the landscape character, but would also bring significant other benefits. There would be balanced advantages and disadvantages from such an approach (reduced social and economic benefits from less development compared to greater weight given to environmental considerations).

Your Views

1. Which of the above approaches is your preference in relation to preserving and enhancing the Borough's landscape and resources? (please tick)

a. Continue the approach of existing Local Plan Policy EN2 Parts 4 (Land Resources), 5 (Coastal Zone) and 6 (Landscape Character)

b. Alternative 1 – similar to option 1 (parts of existing Policy EN2) but would remove the Coastal Zone designation

c. Alternative 2 – A less restrictive approach than existing WLLP Policy EN2 Parts 4, 5 and 6

d. Alternative 3 – A more prescriptive approach than existing Local Plan Policy EN2 Parts 4, 5 and 6

e. Other (please explain and give more details)

2. Is there anything in our preferred approach that you particularly support (or disagree with)?

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3. Should development on greenfield sites on the edge of and outside existing settlements only take place where the landscape and land resource are less sensitive to change?

Y / N

4. Do you have any other comments on this topic e.g. are there any issues we've not mentioned?

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Links

West Lancashire Natural Areas and Areas of Landscape History Importance SPG:

https://www.westlancs.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/supplementary-planning-guidance.aspx

The North West Marine Plan: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/north-west-marine-plan

The National Character Area Profiles for the North West of England (Natural England 2014):

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making/national-character-area-profiles#ncas-in-north-west-england

The Agricultural Land Classification Map for the North West:

http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/144015?category=5954148537204736

< Consultation and the policies 'homepages' >

POLICY EH03 - FLOOD RISK AND WATER RESOURCES

> **Why is a policy needed?**
>
> Flooding can arise from a variety of sources: rivers and the sea, surface water, groundwater, sewers, canals or reservoirs. West Lancashire is a diverse area, including some coastline along the Ribble Estuary, extensive low lying mosslands in the west (the 'Alt Crossens area') and higher land in the east of the Borough, which means that flooding from all these sources is a risk.
>
> Future flood risk is linked to global warming, with expected rising sea levels and more intense rainfall requiring management and mitigation. We need to direct new development towards areas of lowest flood risk, use green spaces to store surface water and slow down run-off, and have suitable flood defences. Tackling climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, efficiently using our resources, reducing waste and developing renewable energy further would also help to address flood risk.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

13 CLIMATE ACTION

Our preferred approach

Update the existing Local Plan Policy GN3 part 3 (Reducing Flood Risk) to reflect advances in national guidance and practice and more recent local evidence on flood risk

The preferred approach would ensure that development does not result in unacceptable flood risk or drainage problems. No residential development site allocations would be proposed in areas at highest risk from flooding. Planning applications will need to be accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment in all situations where a medium or higher flood risk from any source is identified, not only where the proposed development site is greater than 1 hectare in Flood Zone 1, an area the Environment Agency has identified with critical drainage problems (ACDP) or that the Local Authority has identified as a Critical Drainage Area.

Uses that are most vulnerable to flooding need to locate on the parts of a development site at lowest flood risk. The sequential test (locating development on sites at least risk from flooding from all sources) and the exception test (about a development providing wider sustainability benefits and being safe for its lifetime) will be required as set out by national advice, the latter using a local West Lancashire methodology. Developments will dispose of surface water in an order of priority with discharge to a public foul sewer not being permitted. They would also need to incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (for example green or blue features) as far as practical. Water quality (relating to water courses, water bodies and groundwater), water use and the protection of assets would also be addressed.

The benefit of this approach would be to follow national advice and to advance this to give a local West Lancashire perspective. The Council's Sustainability Appraisal indicates that this approach would have a range of positive effects and would be the most sustainable of all the approaches considered for this topic.

Alternative approaches

1. Existing Local Plan Policy GN3: Criteria for Sustainable Development, Part 3 (Reducing Flood Risk)

The policy ensures that development does not result in unacceptable flood risk or drainage problems by requiring it to:

1)be located away from Flood Zones 2 and 3 (areas at greater risk of coastal and river flooding);

2) where applicable, satisfy the sequential and exception test;

3) be supported by a Flood Risk Assessment (but in fewer circumstances than the preferred approach);

4) show that sustainable drainage systems have been explored and reduce surface water run-off.

The policy would be supported by a small number of residential development site allocations in areas at greater risk of coastal and river flooding e.g. in the Northern Parishes. The advantage of this approach would be setting a local framework for proposals to consider flood risk; the disadvantage would be that it is now a little out of date due to advancements in national advice and improvements to the Council's evidence base.

<u>2. A new policy similar to the preferred policy approach above but less strict about when a Flood Risk Assessment would be required with a planning application</u>

Content would be as per the preferred policy approach except that a Flood Risk Assessment would only be needed for planning applications on sites in Flood Zone 1 greater than 1 hectare or less the 1 hectare in an area the Environment Agency has identified with critical drainage problems (ACDPs) or that the Local Authority has identified as a Critical Drainage Area (CDA). This approach would have advantages in terms of placing less information requirements upon an applicant but the disadvantage would be to potentially overlook finer details regarding flood risk in relation to a development and how they may need to be addressed e.g. in terms of surface water or groundwater risk.

Your Views

1. Which of the above approaches is your preference in relation to flood risk and water resources? (please tick)

    a. The Council's Preferred Approach - Update existing Local Plan Policy GN3

    b. Alternative Approach no.1 – existing Local Plan Policy GN3

    c. Alternative Approach no.2 –less strict about when a Flood Risk Assessment is needed

    d. Other (please explain and give more details)

2. Is there anything in our preferred approach that you particularly support (or disagree with)?

3. Should all new residential development incorporate green features on site such as open spaces, ponds and trees, wherever practical, in order to store surface water on site and reduce surface water run-off.

Y / N

4. Do you have any other comments on this topic e.g. are there any issues we've not mentioned?

Links

< Existing Local Plan Policy GN3: Criteria for Sustainable Development >

Level 1 and 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessments: https://www.westlancs.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/the-local-plan/the-local-plan-2023-2040/evidence-base/strategic-flood-risk-assessment.aspx

National Planning Policy Framework, Section 14 Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2

< Consultation and the policies 'homepages' >

EH04 – CONTAMINATION AND POLLUTION

> **Why is a policy needed?**
>
> In one sense, contamination and pollution are matters largely dealt with by legislation outside of Planning, and by other teams / bodies, e.g. Environmental Health or the Environment Agency. So the options for a local plan policy on pollution and contamination are therefore limited. However, Planning strongly interlinks with, and can influence, pollution and contamination. It can also help reduce people's exposure to pollution and contamination. These matters link strongly to health, which is one of the most important considerations in this Local Plan.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?

Our preferred approach

Broadly continue with current Local Plan policy. Proposals for development will need to minimise the risk from all types of pollution and contamination, and to seek to remediate and restore contaminated land.

Current policy is in the West Lancashire Local Plan policy GN3 parts 5(v) and 5(vii). The new policy (which may be a policy in its own right, or else part of a wider policy), would make a direct reference to health. It would go further than WLLP policy GN3 by resisting development that would result in neighbours, and / or future residents or occupiers of the development site being exposed to unacceptable levels of pollution or contamination. (The policy would need to carefully define what is meant by 'unacceptable'.) The policy would also cover light and noise pollution (including noise linked to businesses' operating hours).

Where development is proposed on a site that may be contaminated, the policy would require the developer to work out the nature, degree and extent of any contamination and other relevant ground conditions on the development site. This would be done by carrying out site investigations before starting work. (This requirement may also be covered by other policies / legislation.)

This approach enables planning to add 'extra value' to the pollution / contamination topic area, and supports the approach of considering health in as many Local Plan policies as possible. The Sustainability Appraisal concludes that this preferred approach is more sustainable than the alternatives.

Alternative approaches

<u>Have no specific policy on pollution and contamination</u>

This approach would rely on other legislation (e.g. on environmental health) to protect residents / occupiers / neighbours from exposure to pollution and contamination, and these matters would not be given specific mention in any Local Plan policy. The advantage of doing this would be to make the plan simpler, and to make life simpler for developers. The disadvantage would be to miss out on the 'extra value' from having a Local Plan policy, for example considering such matters as light pollution and people's overall health and wellbeing.

<u>Take a more relaxed approach to pollution and contamination in order to prioritise brownfield land development</u>

This approach would support the redevelopment of brownfield land by minimising the requirements for dealing with pollution and contamination, and the requirements for protecting residents / occupiers / neighbours from exposure to pollution and contamination. However, it would still need to comply with other relevant policy and legislation (including outside of Planning). For example, i.e. it would not allow exposure to illegally high levels of pollution and contamination, but it may have lower standards for mitigation / clean-up etc. compared to the preferred policy approach.

The advantage of this alternative would be to make redevelopment of brownfield land a little easier, which could in turn lead to less pressure to build on greenfield land. The main disadvantages would be the increased risk to human health and a probability of greater harm to the natural environment.

Your Views

Which of the three approaches do you think is the most appropriate, and why?

1. **Use the preferred policy**

2. **Have no policy**

3. **A more relaxed approach**

Free text for 'why'….?

| |
| |

Is there anything in our policy approaches that you particularly support or disagree with?

| |
| |

Do you have any other comments on this topic?

| |
| |

Links

< [National Planning Policy Framework](#) >

< Consultation / policies >

EH05 – AIR QUALITY

Why is a policy needed?

New development has the potential to affect air quality. Emissions from industry, from domestic properties, and from traffic, can pollute the air. Poor air quality affects not only the natural environment but also human health. Some aspects of air pollution are covered by Environmental Health laws, but Planning has the potential to influence air quality even more.

For example, planning policies can require measures to be put in place to minimise air pollution from new development. Effects on health can be controlled to an extent by keeping sources of pollution away from humans as far as possible. And new development can also help improve air quality, for example through appropriate planting and landscaping.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?

Our preferred approach

Have a policy that requires new development to minimise reductions in air quality and / or improve it where possible, and to locate sensitive uses away from sources of air pollution

This policy would continue the approach of the current West Lancashire Local Plan policy GN3.5(i) by requiring proposals for new development to be designed so that any lessening of air quality is kept to a minimum. The policy would also add a 'positive' requirement that new developments should look for opportunities to improve air quality, for example through planting and landscaping.

There would be cross-reference or overlap with other policies too, notably:

a) Transport – seeking to reduce motor vehicle use and encourage active / green transport;

b) Energy – supporting non-polluting ways of generating and using energy;

c) Place-making – seeking to locate sensitive uses as far away as possible from sources of air pollution (for example avoid school and nursery playgrounds next to busy roads but close to green space / linear parks, etc.).

This policy approach would use planning powers to reduce potential harm to air quality, and to improve it where possible.

Alternative approach

Have no policy on air quality

The alternative is to have no specific policy on air quality but instead to rely on other policies. These may be policies on design in general, on transport, and on renewable energy, and also any Environmental Health requirements (separate from planning law). If air quality is covered by these alternative policies, then the only difference between this alternative and the preferred policy approach would be the lack of a requirement for new developments to seek to improve (rather than limit losses to) air quality. The advantage of this approach would be to have fewer policies in the Local Plan, possibly making it a little simpler. The disadvantages would be a lack of a co-ordinated 'central' approach to air quality, and the loss of the opportunity to achieve better air quality for some developments.

Your Views

Which policy approach do you think we should take?

- **Have a policy**
- **Have no policy**

Please explain why…

Can you think of any other ways we can improve or protect air quality through planning policy?

How important do you think it is to protect or improve air quality?   (On a scale of 1-10)

Do you have any other comments on this topic?

Links

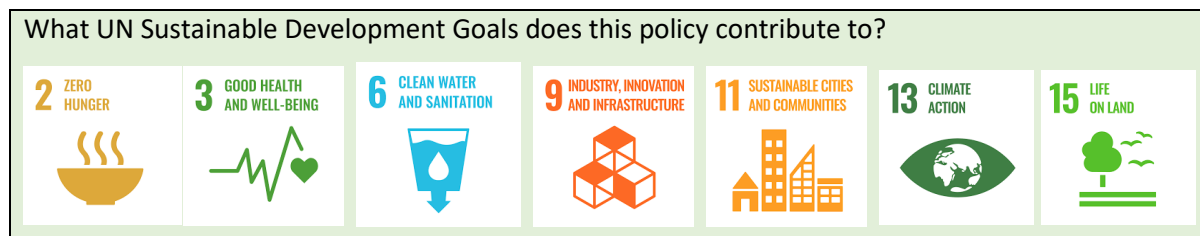< Consultation / policies >

POLICY EH06 - GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE & OPEN SPACE

Why is a policy / policies needed?

Our natural and man-made environment provides places for active leisure, for example greenspaces and open space, as well as purpose-built leisure and community facilities. Green Infrastructure (GI) is the name given to the network of integrated green space and other green and blue features (water bodies) both urban and rural. It provides many benefits, for example enhancing quality of life and the environment, improving the image of a place, enabling exercise and improving health and well-being, cooling urban areas, reducing surface water run-off and providing habitats for nature.

Overall, there is good GI provision in West Lancashire, including large areas of Green Belt used for food production. However, publicly accessible open spaces are distributed less evenly and some areas don't have enough, with new development potentially creating a need for more. There are also ongoing pressures for the development of open spaces for more profitable commercial or residential uses. We need to make sure there are enough open spaces to meet informal use and formal sporting needs in the future and ensure the ongoing provision of active indoor leisure opportunities at sports centres, swimming pools, gyms and community facilities.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?

2 ZERO HUNGER   3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING   6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION   9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE   11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES   13 CLIMATE ACTION   15 LIFE ON LAND

Please note there are 4 preferred policy approaches below, A, B, C and D, each dealing with different aspects of this topic area.

Our preferred approach A: Green Infrastructure

An overarching Green Infrastructure policy

An overarching Green Infrastructure (GI) policy would promote protecting and enhancing the GI network as well as promoting Active Design and the improvement of cycling and walking networks. The advantage of this approach would be to outline strategic matters and broad principles in order to set a framework for more detailed policies in relation to open space, trees and woodland.

Alternative approach A

1. Update Adopted Local Plan Policy EN3: Provision of Green Infrastructure and Open Recreation Space

The existing policy is split into two parts: 1) Green Infrastructure (GI) and 2) Open Space and Recreation Facilities. The first part sets out a strategic approach for how development would support providing a network of green spaces. The second part (open space) sets out the local circumstances when the loss of existing open space, sport and recreation facilities would be permitted, when new open space would expect to be provided by new development, and West Lancashire's key existing open spaces to be protected and improved.

To meet national advice and requirements, this policy would need to include amended criteria for when the development of open space would be permitted, as well as local standards for providing new open space in connection with new residential development, and costs for off-site open space provision. The advantage of this approach would be continuity with existing Local Plan policy, but the disadvantage would be a lengthy policy as a result of the additions needed to meet national advice.

Your Views approach A: Green Infrastructure

1. Which of the above approaches is your preference in relation to Green Infrastructure? (please tick)

a. The Council's Preferred Approach – An overarching Green Infrastructure policy

b. Alternative Approach no.1 – Update Adopted Local Plan Policy EN3

c. Other (please explain and give more details)

2. Is there anything in our preferred approach that you particularly support (or disagree with)?

3. Should all new developments above a certain size be required to incorporate features that encourage an active lifestyle for local residents and visitors, such as walking and cycling between locations?

Y / N

4. Do you have any other comments on this topic e.g. are there any issues we've not mentioned?

Our preferred approach B: Open Space

An Open Space, Sport, Leisure and Physical Activity policy

A policy covering both open spaces and built leisure facilities. It would contain criteria for considering when the loss of open space (including smaller greenspaces not shown on the Local Plan Policies Map) and built leisure facilities would be permitted and include local standards (based upon type of open space, quantity, quality and accessibility) for providing new open space in connection with new residential development. It would identify where key parts of the open space network would be protected and improved. Playing pitch requirements would be considered separately by reference to the West Lancashire Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan and, along with built development, Sport England guidance.

The advantage of this approach would be to consolidate open space and built leisure facilities considerations into a single policy. Separating these matters into two separate policies would be reasonable (alternative 2 below) and would largely be a matter of presentation.

Alternative approaches B

1. Update Adopted Local Plan Policy EN3: Provision of Green Infrastructure and Open Recreation Space

The approach would be as described above as the alternative to preferred approach A. This would result in a lengthy policy.

2. A separate built sports facilities policy

Preferred policy approach B would be separated into two policies, with one dealing with open space and the other with built sports facilities. This would largely be a matter of presentation compared to preferred approach B.

Your views approach B: Open Space

1. Which of the above approaches is your preference in relation to Open Space? (please tick)

   a. The Council's Preferred Approach – An Open Space, Sport, Leisure and Physical Activity policy

   b. Alternative Approach no.1 – Update Adopted Local Plan Policy EN3

   c. Alternative Approach no.2 – A separate built sports facilities policy

   d. Other (please explain and give more details)

2. Is there anything in our preferred approach that you particularly support (or disagree with)?

3. Should all new residential developments over a certain size be required to incorporate green infrastructure in the form of public open space using standards that are set locally?

Y /N

4. Do you have any other comments on this topic e.g. are there any issues we've not mentioned?

Our preferred approach C: Open Space and Residential Development

An Open Space and Residential Development policy

This would be a companion to preferred policy approach B and would set out the circumstances when local open space standards would apply to new residential development proposals. The policy would contain an accompanying table of costs for open space provision and maintenance by different types of open space per sqm. for when a financial contribution for off-site open space would be needed when it could not be provided on site.

The advantage of this approach would be to clearly set out the open space requirements upon new residential development with associated costs in the Local Plan. Dealing with the circumstances when local open space standards would apply by a supplementary planning document would not be the most suitable approach because national advice indicates that the local plan should identify definite costs upon development

Alternative approach C

1. A policy similar to that above but also requiring open space to be provided in connection with selected commercial developments, such as offices, above a size threshold.

The advantage of this approach would be as preferred approach C above but the disadvantage would be additional challenges in adding standards and costs for open space required in relation to new commercial development where there is a lesser usage relationship to open space use compared to residential i.e. people's use of open space where they live. This would make such an approach difficult to evidence.

Your views approach C: Open Space and Residential Development

1. Which of the above approaches is your preference in relation to Open Space and Residential Development? (please tick)

a. The Council's Preferred Approach – An Open Space and Residential Development policy

b. Alternative Approach no.1 – also requiring open space to be provided in connection with selected commercial developments

c. Other (please explain and give more details)

2. Is there anything in our preferred approach that you particularly support (or disagree with)?

[ ]

3. Should all new residential developments of any size that are unable to provide open space on site be required to provide a financial contribution towards new off-site open space or the improvement of existing public open space in that locality, as long as this is financially viable?   Y / N

4. Do you have any other comments on this topic e.g. are there any issues we've not mentioned?

[ ]

Our preferred approach D: Trees, Woodland, Hedgerows

A Trees, Woodland, Hedgerows and Landscaping policy

This policy would seek to protect and enhance existing trees, woodlands and hedgerows and encourage the creation of additional tree cover. It would set out how woodland, trees and hedgerows should be considered in relation to new development proposals, the information to be accompanied with a planning application and when replacement trees and / or landscape planting would be required. There would be enhanced protection of any area of ancient woodland or of any ancient or veteran trees.

The advantage of this approach would be to update and refine the existing Local Plan policy.

Alternative approach

<u>1. Part 3 of existing Adopted Local Plan Policy EN2: Preserving and Enhancing West Lancashire's Natural Environment</u>

This approach would continue to deal with trees and landscaping as part of existing local plan Policy EN2. It would set out how woodland and trees should be considered in relation to new development proposals, the information to be accompanied with a planning application and when replacement trees and / or landscape planting would be required.

The advantage of this approach would be continuity with the existing Local Plan but the disadvantage would be not taking the opportunity to refine this policy.

Your views approach D: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows

1. Which of the above approaches is your preference in relation to Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows? (please tick)

   a. The Council's Preferred Approach - A Trees, Woodland, Hedgerows and Landscaping policy

   b. Alternative Approach no.1 – Part 3 of existing Adopted Local Plan Policy EN2

   c. Other (please explain and give more details)

2. Is there anything in our preferred approach that you particularly support (or disagree with)?

[ ]

3. Do you have any other comments on this topic e.g. are there any issues we've not mentioned?

Links

< Existing Local Plan Policy EN3: Provision of Green Infrastructure and Open Recreation Space >

< Consultation and the policies 'homepages' >

National Planning Policy Framework, particularly Section 8 (Promoting healthy and safe communities):

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2

West Lancashire Open Space Study incorporating Assessment Report (April 2018) and Standards and Strategy Paper (September 2018)

West Lancashire Playing Pitch Strategy incorporating Assessment Report (February 2018) and Strategy and Action Plan (September 2018) both of which can be found here:

https://www.westlancs.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/the-local-plan/the-local-plan-2038/evidence-base.aspx

West Lancashire Built Facilities Assessment (January 2015):
https://www.westlancs.gov.uk/about-the-council/spending-strategies-performance/strategies-and-plans/leisure-strategy-and-assessments.aspx

Sport England's Active Design Guidance which can be found here:
https://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/facilities-and-planning/design-and-cost-guidance/active-design

<mark>For Glossary</mark>
Green Infrastructure : A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity. It includes agriculture, parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands, street trees, allotments, private gardens, green roofs and walls and also includes rivers, streams, canals and other water bodies, sometimes called 'blue infrastructure'.

Greenspace refers to any vegetated land or water, either private or publicly accessible, within an urban area and is therefore a subset of Green Infrastructure (GI). Open space is a slightly different subset of GI as it includes publicly accessible land only and in the following typologies: parks and gardens, natural and semi-natural, greenspaces, green corridors, outdoor sports facilities, amenity greenspaces, provision for children and young people, allotments and cemeteries as well as civic spaces which are predominantly hard surfaced.

POLICY EH07 - HEALTHY EATING AND DRINKING

Why is a policy needed?

A policy in relation to healthy eating and drinking would be beneficial as, along with physical activity, it would offer opportunities for healthier lifestyles. Inactivity and high calorie food and drink are major contributors to increasing levels of obesity both for children and adults, for which the Borough is fairing worse than the national average. Adult obesity increases the risk of poor health and illnesses including diabetes and heart disease. Planning can affect food and drink choices by reducing access to less healthy food and drink establishments and increasing access to fresh, healthy and locally sourced food. It needs to be recognised, in this context, that in suitable numbers fast food outlets and drinking establishments can provide a local service, adding to the offer of town and local centres.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?

Our preferred approach

A healthy eating and drinking policy which deals with hot food takeaways and drinking establishment uses supported by more detail in a Healthy Eating and Drinking Supplementary Planning Document

The preferred policy approach deals with drinking establishments and hot food takeaways (both Sui Generis uses) specifically. It would outline the circumstances whereby proposals for these uses would be supported and require all proposals for them to be accompanied by a Health Impact Assessment (HIA). The policy would set out where hot food takeaways and drinking establishments could be located, and in what amounts, both in town and local centres and in relation to schools and colleges. It would be supported by a Healthy Eating and Drinking Supplementary Planning Document providing further detail. The promotion of healthy eating through the development of allotments would be dealt with separately by Green Infrastructure and open space policies.

The advantage of this approach is it would introduce a new policy on healthy eating and drinking, compared to no current local policy and would encourage healthy lifestyles, and possibly also in terms of reducing health inequalities. It would also allow more detail in supplementary policy. The disadvantage would be to restrict the amount and location of fast-food outlets and drinking establishments which provide a local service and add to the range of uses, including in town and local centres.

Alternative approaches

1. No specific policy dealing with healthy eating and drinking

Such an approach would be on the basis of it being considered that there is no need to address these issues in West Lancashire. The Sustainability Appraisal indicates that this would be the least effective option and has the disadvantage of not linking with the Council's wider policies aimed at improving health.

2. No specific policy dealing with healthy eating and drinking as these issues will be dealt with by other policies in the Local Plan

This approach would mean that, for example, allotment provision could be addressed by Green Infrastructure and open space policies and the proportion of takeaways and public houses could be addressed by a town centre policy. Whilst possible, the disadvantages of this approach may be that the

promotion of healthy eating and drinking could be lost within other, more wide ranging policies and there would be reduced opportunity to address how the location of less healthy eating establishments relates to younger people in terms of proximity to schools and colleges.

3. Similar to option 3, no specific policy dealing with healthy eating and drinking as these issues can be dealt with by other policies in the Local Plan but produce a Supplementary Planning Document

This approach would be supported by the publication of a Healthy Eating and Drinking Supplementary Planning Document detailing what uses would be permitted in town, village and local centres and any restrictions on allowing fast food takeaways within easy walking distance of schools, as well as matters such as noise, odour and amenity. This would have advantages in providing detail in supplementary policy but the disadvantage of not giving health issues as much profile in the Local Plan as compared to the preferred approach.

Your Views

1. Which of the above approaches is your preference in relation to healthy eating and drinking? (please tick)

a. The Council's Preferred Approach - a healthy eating and drinking policy supported by more detail in a Healthy Eating and Drinking Supplementary Planning Document

b. Alternative Approach no.1 – no specific policy dealing with healthy eating and drinking

c. Alternative Approach no.2 – no specific policy dealing with healthy eating and drinking as these issues will be dealt with by other policies in the Local Plan

d. Alternative Approach no.3 – no specific policy dealing with healthy eating and drinking as these issues can be dealt with by other policies in the Local Plan but produce a Supplementary Planning Document

e. Other (please explain and give more details)

2. Is there anything in our preferred approach that you particularly support (or disagree with)?

3. Should there be restrictions upon the number of takeaways and drinking establishments permitted in our town, village, local and neighbourhood centres?

Y / N

4. Should there be restrictions upon takeaways being permitted in proximity (e.g. within 400 metres, equivalent to a 5 minute walk) of primary and secondary schools?

Y / N

5. Do you have any other comments on this topic e.g. are there any issues we've not mentioned?

Links

West Lancashire Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2021:
https://www.westlancs.gov.uk/about-the-council/spending-strategies-performance/strategies-and-plans.aspx

National Planning Policy Framework e.g. section 8 Promoting healthy and safe communities:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2

< Consultation and the policies 'homepages' >

Links

West Lancashire Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2021:
https://www.westlancs.gov.uk/about-the-council/spending-strategies-performance/strategies-and-plans.aspx

National Planning Policy Framework e.g. section 8 Promoting healthy and safe communities:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2

< Consultation and the policies 'homepages' >

TI01 – TRANSPORT NETWORKS

Why is a policy needed?

Land use planning has strong links to transport – people need to move between different places, and local plans can allocate sites for specific transport projects. There are a number of projects planned, or desired, in West Lancashire, for rail, bus, cycling, walking and roads. Changes are afoot nationally (for example, a revised Highway Code that gives greater priority to pedestrians and cyclists, and there are new ideas such as a '20 minute neighbourhood'. During the 2020 lockdown, many people had a taste of what life could be like with much more walking and cycling, and much less road traffic. It would be useful to refer to these different things in a new Local Plan policy.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

13 CLIMATE ACTION

Our preferred approach

A policy that sets out specific transport schemes and supports the 20 minute neighbourhood concept.

The first part of the policy would carry on the current West Lancashire Local Plan ('WLLP') approach by setting out a list of proposed or desired transport improvement schemes across the Borough. These schemes would be supported and protected (i.e. we would not allow development that could prejudice their delivery). Some schemes would link with other Local Plan policies, e.g. the proposed Linear Parks in the Green Infrastructure policy. The policy would also require developers of new schemes to think about how they link to these transport networks, especially walking and cycling links.

The policy would also lend general support to the '20 minute neighbourhood' idea – designing places so that people can access as many services as possible within a 20 minute walk (see also the place-making policy < link >). It should also recognise changes to the Highway Code that give more priority to vulnerable road users. Together, these elements should enable people to walk and cycle more, rather than be dependent upon cars.

The benefits of this policy would firstly be a consistent approach with the current WLLP, recognising that some transport schemes take a long time to come to fruition. It would also seek to help make places more 'sustainable' and healthier, encouraging trips on foot and by bicycle, tying in with the Council's 'green' agenda and recognising the declaration of a climate emergency.

Alternative approaches

1. To only list schemes that we know will be delivered

This approach would omit schemes such as the Ormskirk Bypass and Skelmersdale rail link as there is currently no certainty that they will go ahead. Instead, the list would be confined to schemes which currently have funding. The policy could still refer to the 20-minute neighbourhood.

The disadvantage of this approach is that removing reference to schemes that are not certain to be delivered would undermine their chances of being delivered. Also, if the proposed routes of such schemes are not protected, then building on these routes could remove all possibility of their delivery.

For a scheme such as the proposed Skelmersdale rail link, which could bring significant benefits to West Lancashire and beyond, it is considered irresponsible to allow for the scheme to be stopped before even trying to bid for funding.

2. To not list any specific schemes

This approach would mean that the proposed or desired transport schemes would not be listed individually in a specific Plan policy, but would be replaced by a short 'catch-all statement' giving support for improved transport infrastructure, either in this policy (which would consequently be a lot shorter) or other policies - both strategic / general, and topic-specific, e.g. the Green Infrastructure policy. Presumably, this approach would also mean not marking proposed schemes on the Local Plan Policies Map.

The policy could still refer to the 20-minute neighbourhood, although as per the preferred policy option, it would also be covered in the place-making policy. As such, the most extreme version of this alternative policy approach would be for there to be no policy at all.

Once again, the disadvantage of this approach would be to undermine or prevent the delivery of certain schemes that could bring great benefits to West Lancashire.

Your Views

What approach should we take towards transport schemes?

- **List all proposed and desired schemes**
- **List only the schemes we know will happen**
- **Don't list any schemes**
- **Other approach (please specify what)**

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Looking at the [list of schemes in the current Local Plan](), are there any that should be removed in the new Plan? Are there any that should be added in the new Plan?

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What are your views on a policy for ['20 minute neighbourhoods']() (link)? Should we promote these in the new Plan?

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Do you have any other comments on this topic?

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Links

< [West Lancashire Local Plan]() >

< [List of WLLP transport schemes (WLLP policy IF2)]() >

< ['20 minute neighbourhoods']() >

TI02 – PARKING STANDARDS AND ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING POINTS

> **Why is a policy needed?**
>
> In relation to the climate emergency, the highest proportions of carbon emissions come from travel, and so a switch to cleaner, electric energy needs to be supported whilst also promoting sustainable and active travel (cycling, walking, public transport) to improve health and improve air quality. We know that car parking can provide benefits to an area, including attracting customers to town centre businesses. However, it can also contribute to congestion, hinder traffic movement, and be a potential danger for cyclists and pedestrians. In addition, the semi-rural nature of the Borough means that private vehicle use is often the preferred choice for many, and, as the Government intend to phase out the sale of petrol and diesel cars by 2030, we need to make sure that there is an available and expanding energy infrastructure to support electric vehicle usage.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?

Our preferred approach

Maintain the current policy which sets car parking standards, agreed between all Lancashire authorities, and sets the minimum number of electric vehicle charging points that should be provided on new residential and commercial developments.

This approach would continue to provide adequate levels of parking on new developments, whilst also helping to encourage the use of 'active travel' modes – like walking, cycling and public transport - and discourage private vehicle use. It may not go far enough to sufficiently discourage car use and promote 'sustainable travel' to improve health and respond to the climate emergency, but most likely strikes the appropriate balance given the Borough's semi-rural nature.

EVCPs would continue to be required for all new developments that require parking.

The Council's Sustainability Appraisal considered that this approach would have a neutral effect in terms of sustainability. Whilst other options would, in principle, appear to be more sustainable by reducing car parking so to force people to alternative modes of transport, this could lead to unwanted knock-on effects (see below).

Alternative approaches

1. <u>Introduce a more restrictive policy to limit car parking spaces in new developments</u>

National policy puts pedestrians and cyclists at the top of the road hierarchy. This approach would help prioritise walking, cycling and public transport over private vehicles, and help respond to the climate emergency. However, the borough is semi-rural and difficulties with accessibility of alternative modes of public transport would make this approach difficult and could cause negative knock-on effects like on street parking.

2. Introduce a policy that does not restrict car parking spaces

This approach would impose few or no restrictions on parking, but would subsequently likely increase vehicular traffic especially in town and village centres. It would fail to encourage the prioritisation of walking, cycling and public transport over private vehicles and would fail to respond to the climate emergency.

3. Don't require Electric Vehicle Charging Points

This approach would fail to ensure that appropriate numbers of EVCPs are provided on new developments. Given national Governments push to ban the sale of petrol and diesel cars by 2030, this would create added future costs for homeowners through retrofitting.

Your Views

Do you agree with our preferred approach to parking standards and Electric vehicle charging points?

Is there anything in our policy approach that you particularly support (or disagree with)?

Should we be doing more to encourage a move away from (petrol/diesel) private vehicle use?

- **Yes**
- **No**
- **Other**

Please explain your answer

Do you have any other comments on this topic?

Links

< Draft policy text >

< Evidence >

< Consultation and the policies 'homepages' >

TI03 – COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

Why is a policy needed?

Communications and digital connectivity (e.g. 4G, 5G, broadband) are now essential parts of modern life. Those areas with poor connections, for example in rural areas, will find themselves at a social and economic disadvantage so it is important we improve access for everyone. In addition, technology is rapidly evolving and we must make sure we are adaptable to these changes. Digital connectivity also gives us opportunities to support smart technologies which enable the collection, analysis and sharing of data on things like water and energy consumption, that can help us become more sustainable and assist service planning.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?

Our preferred approach

A flexible policy that governs communications and digital connectivity

A flexible approach would support the NPPF, which sets most guidance for communications development, whilst also enabling additional management of new infrastructure, for example promoting the sharing of existing facilities (masts, building, structures) and working to minimise / mitigate adverse impacts on the locality.

The Council's Sustainability Appraisal considers that this option would be the most sustainable approach owing to its flexibility.

Alternative approaches

1. Have no policy

This approach would place sole dependence on national planning policy (the NPPF) to guide new communications and digital connectivity, and so would reflect the approach of the current Local Plan. It means the Council would be unable to locally manage the siting and delivery of new communication developments, but would instead give maximum flexibility.

2. Introduce a policy that provides a high level of control, for example, by requiring new development to go beyond Part R1 of the Building Regulations 2010

This approach would provide greater control over the siting and delivery of telecommunication and broadband infrastructure but would be inflexible to evolving technologies and requirements and could make it harder to deliver new communications.

Your Views

Which option do you most closely support?

- **Flexible policy**
- **No policy**
- **Restrictive policy**

Please add any comments on your choice

[ ]

Is there anything in our policy approaches that you particularly support (or disagree with)?

[ ]

Do you have any other comments on this topic?

[ ]

Links

< Draft policy text >

< Evidence >

< Consultation / Policies.>

TI04 – RENEWABLE AND LOW CARBON ENERGY GENERATION

Why is a policy needed?

Some of the largest carbon emissions are from energy. To reduce carbon emissions, we need to stop using fossil fuels (coal, oil etc) and move to cleaner, greener and renewable sources of energy such as wind and solar. Moving forward, renewable and low carbon energy is expected to be increasingly important to our economy, and so there are opportunities for the Borough to strengthen its 'green economy' as well as reducing emissions and improving air quality. Community energy schemes can help to reduce energy bills for local people and address fuel poverty within the Borough. Such local schemes also help reduce reliance on centralised suppliers, and imported power, aiding self-sufficiency. However, we also need to make sure that any opportunities for renewable energy are balanced with protecting important areas of the Borough – including landscape, heritage, agricultural land and important bird and bat species, migration routes and habitats.
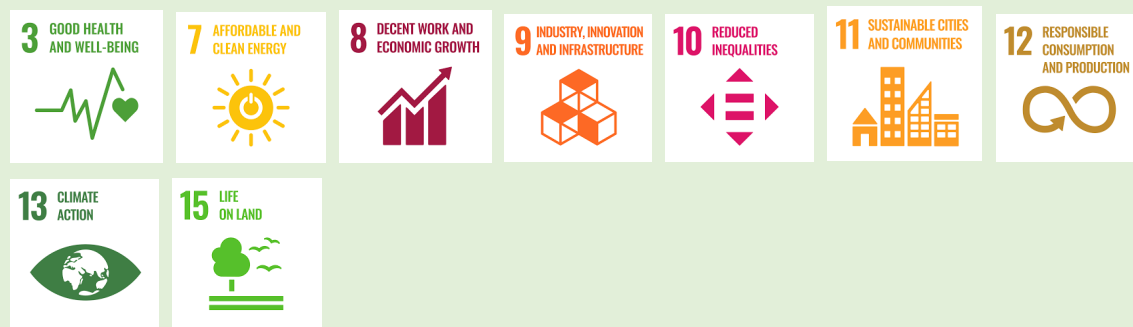
Our preferred approach

Designate specific areas of opportunity for low carbon and renewable energy (LCRE)

National planning policy says that wind energy development may only be considered acceptable if it is in an area identified as suitable for wind energy development in the Local Plan (and, ultimately, is also backed by the local community). This approach would identify and designate the most appropriate areas of the Borough for wind development, as well as setting out its approach for solar and other energy schemes (based on an evidence base study), to enable to strategically plan for LCRE and comply with national planning policy requirements.

Such an approach would enable the support of LCRE developments subject to criteria on appropriate design, assessment of environmental / landscape / visual / land resource impacts, and community consultation. It would support national obligations to reduce fossil fuel consumption, and carbon emissions, to help tackle the climate emergency. To support a move to net zero, the policy also lends support for community-led LCRE schemes and would improve energy self-sufficiency.

The Council's Sustainability Appraisal considered that this option would be the most sustainable approach, by pro-actively designating the most appropriate areas of the Borough as suitable for renewable energy. However, it noted that it could be combined with alternative option 2 (below).

Alternative approaches

1. Do not allocate any areas for low carbon and renewable energy development, in order to enable a flexible response to schemes.

This approach supports an adaptable, flexible and broad approach towards LCRE, simply relying on criteria for siting / assessment of proposals. As it would not designate any specific areas of the Borough as being suitable or wind developments, this would not comply with national policy requirements and therefore it would be very difficult or impossible to deliver any wind schemes. It could lead to reactive, not strategic, planning and would fail to do enough to deliver renewable energy whilst also limiting green economic opportunities for the borough. It could also make it more difficult to ensure the protection of important areas, because of its 'reactive' nature. This approach would fail to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and respond to the climate emergency.

2. Require all new developments to provide renewable energy – e.g. solar panels on commercial buildings and new dwellings or, on larger schemes, district heating networks.

This approach would require every new building to provide some of its energy via low carbon and renewable energy in line with national standards. Particularly in the early years of the plan period, as technologies develop, this may not be a financially viable option and could sterilise development. Such an approach may limit the types of renewable energy use to those listed in the policy and would not allow for other innovative / creative responses. However, it would help to respond to the climate emergency by increasing low carbon and renewable energy sources.

Your Views

Which option do you most closely support?

- **Designate areas for LCRE**
- **No designations**
- **Require provision of LCRE in all new developments**

Comments…

Is there anything in our policy approaches that you particularly support (or disagree with)?

Should we require all new developments to provide some low carbon or renewable energy through their design – for example, by requiring all new dwellings to have solar panels?

Do you agree we should designate areas for renewable energy, where evidence shows that it would be appropriate to do so?

Do you have any other comments on this topic?

Links

< Draft policy text >

< Evidence >

- <LCRE Study >

< Consultation / policies >

TI05 – ENERGY EFFICIENCIES IN NEW BUILDINGS

Why is a policy needed?

Evidence shows us that the energy use in homes accounts for 20% of UK greenhouse gas emissions (CCC 2019) and this needs to fall if we are to achieve the national 'zero net carbon' target by 2050. We need to make sure we are building homes that are energy efficient: that will use less energy for heating and result in cheaper energy costs for occupiers, and which are also designed to provide shade and ventilation in warmer periods to reduce overheating. Ensuring new builds are energy efficient also minimises the need for later retrofitting which will then come at a cost to the occupiers.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

13 CLIMATE ACTION

Our preferred approach

To require *certain* new residential and commercial developments (e.g. those over a certain threshold) to deliver energy efficiency improvements above national standards.

This approach would likely require major residential and commercial developments to deliver energy efficiency improvements that go beyond national standards. In comparison, minor schemes would just be encouraged. This would ensure that some, but not all, new buildings are energy efficient on the basis that higher standards could render some developments unviable. However, it would be unlikely to deliver the energy efficiencies required to achieve net carbon and would increase costs for some homeowners against rising fuel costs and future needs to retrofit their properties.

To ensure such achievement, developers should be required to monitor energy efficiency improvements in their developments, to evaluate and improve performance to ultimately achieve zero net carbon goals.

The Council's Sustainability Appraisal considers that this option would be the most sustainable because the positive effects would be most marked of all the options assessed.

Alternative approaches

1. To require *all* new residential and commercial developments to deliver energy efficiency improvements above national standards.

This would ensure all new developments achieve energy efficiency improvements above national standards, which would help mitigate climate change. It would also help reduce property owner energy costs, and reduce the need to retrofit at a later date. This approach could also see the Council develop a solid reputation for 'leading' on the provision of energy efficient housing. However, it could affect development viability.

2. To require major developments only to deliver energy efficiency improvements above national standards.

This approach would be similar to the preferred approach above in that it would require major developments (only) to demonstrate how they have considered and are delivering energy efficiency improvements above national standards. Minor developments (e.g. small [<10] residential developments, and householder developments) would fall outside such requirements. As with the preferred option, it would be unlikely to deliver the energy efficiencies required to achieve net carbon and it would be unlikely that most minor developers would choose to voluntarily deliver energy efficiency improvements beyond building regulation requirements. This would increase costs for some homeowners given rising fuel costs and future needs to retrofit their properties.

3. Have no requirements for energy efficiency improvements in new buildings and allow developers to provide what they want in line with national standards.

This approach would not require developers to provide energy efficiency improvements; they would need only to be in accordance with national standards (building regulations) (i.e. outside the Local Plan). It would give the greatest flexibility, but would not help deliver the energy efficiencies required to achieve net carbon.

4. Do not require developers to monitor and evaluate performance.

There can be a performance gap between the energy improvements that may be programmed, and those that may actually be delivered once the development is completed. This approach would place no obligations on developers to monitor energy efficiency improvements and therefore the 'performance gap' would not be closed. However, it would save developers time and money.

Your Views

How important is it to you that new development is energy efficient?

Not……….Very

Should new development in the Borough meet or exceed national standards for energy efficiency?

- **Meet**
- **Exceed**

Please add any comments to explain your answer

What policy approach should we have on this subject?

- **Require certain developments to deliver energy efficiency improvements**
- **Require all developments to deliver energy efficiency improvements**
- **Require major developments to deliver energy efficiency improvements**
- **No requirements to delivering energy efficiency improvements**

What should the policy approach be with regard to monitoring energy performance?

- **Monitoring**
- **No monitoring**

Comments….

Is there anything in our policy approaches that you particularly support (or disagree with)?

In principle, would you pay extra for a house that was zero carbon, on the basis that fuel bills would be a lot cheaper, you would be living in a 'green' house, and / or it would reduce the need to retrofit at a later date?

- **Yes**
- **No**
- **Maybe**
- **Don't know**

Comments…

Please rank the following priorities:

- **Delivering energy efficiency homes**
- **Delivering affordable homes**
- **Providing a greater mix of house sizes**
- **Delivering infrastructure improvements**
- **Improving biodiversity**

Comments…

Do you have any other comments on this topic?

Links

< Draft Policy text>

< Evidence >

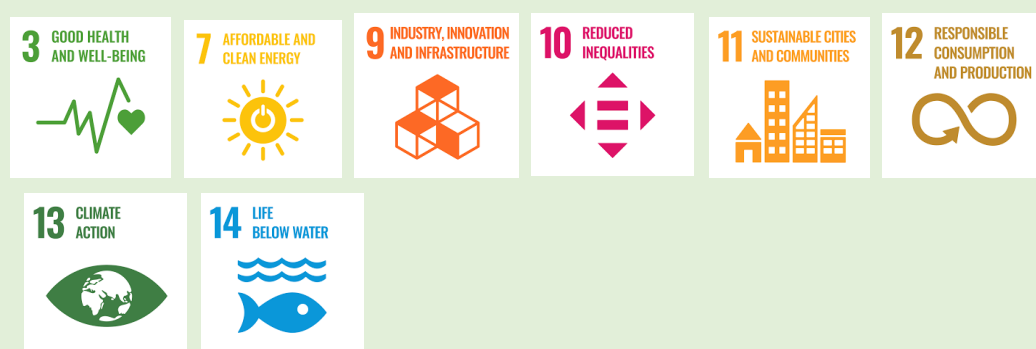< Consultation / Policies homepage >

TI06 – WATER EFFICIENCY

Why is a policy needed?

Climate change will place increasing pressures on water supply. Reducing water consumption in new homes, even by modest amounts, can help secure future water supplies, protect the environment and reduce greenhouse gas emissions (resulting from the energy needed to treat, and heat, water), whilst also resulting in cheaper water bills for residents. In responding to the climate emergency, we need to ensure natural resources are used prudently and not wasted, and this includes water supply and demand.

Building Regulation standards already require all new homes to provide a water efficiency of 125 litres per person per day, but we can also decide to set 'optional' higher standards of 110 litres per person per day, which must be based on evidence.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

13 CLIMATE ACTION

14 LIFE BELOW WATER

Our preferred approach

To introduce tighter, local restrictions, above that of the minimum Building Regulation standards, to improve water efficiency in new residential developments.

This approach would ensure that developments provide greater levels of water efficiency, than that currently required through Building Regulation standards. Better water efficiency means that new homes will use less water, and therefore help reduce stress on water supplies as well as reducing costs for water, energy and reducing carbon emissions. Effective water management also reduces the movement of water and sewage, thereby reducing energy requirements. It is not expected that the installation of water efficient fittings would have any impact on viability but this would be explored through future viability studies. It would be expected that relatively large efficiency gains could be achieved with minimal cost.

The Council's Sustainability Appraisal considered that this option would be the most sustainable because it would help greater protect natural resources and respond to the climate emergency, with little or no negative effects on any of the objectives.

Alternative approach

1. Do not have a policy; rely instead on Building Regulations to deliver water efficiency

This approach would mean that all new residential developments only provide water efficiency in accordance with Building Regulation requirements. This approach would not help better address the climate emergency and households would not benefit from any cost savings.

Your Views

Do you agree that we should require higher water efficiency standards (of 110 litres per person per day) in all new homes?

- **Yes**
- **No**
- **Don't know**

Comments...

Is there anything in our policy approach that you particularly support (or disagree with)?

Do you have any other comments on this topic?

Links

< Draft policy text >

< Evidence / Justification paper >

< Consultation / Policies homepage >

OT01 - SEQUENTIAL TESTS

Why is a policy needed?

The sequential test a requirement of national planning policy relating to town centre uses and flood risk and is a way of ensuring that new development takes place in sustainable locations. It is about guiding new town centre uses to town centres as a first priority, then edge of town centre sites and finally out of centre locations that are accessible. In relation to flood risk, it entails guiding new development towards sites at less risk of flooding from all sources (sea, rivers, surface water, groundwater, artificial sources). It is an applicant's responsibility to undertake and satisfy the test and having our own policy means that we can give more detail about how the Council expects a satisfactory sequential test to be done.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?

Our preferred approach

Amend the current policy to require a sequential test for town centre uses and proposals at risk from flooding in line with national policy but remove reference current local requirements upon affordable housing, employment uses and community Gypsy and Travellers and accommodation for temporary agricultural / horticultural workers.

The policy approach would set out the requirements for undertaking a sequential test, as set out by national advice only, comprising retail and other town centre uses on sites outside centres and proposals at risk from flooding. It would also set out what would be needed to undertake a satisfactory sequential test in terms of area of search, comprehensiveness or search, availability /viability / deliverability of sequentially preferable sites and site suitability.

The benefit of this approach would be to follow national advice but also set out exactly how the Council expects a satisfactory sequential test to be done locally and what information is expected from an applicant. The Council's Sustainability Appraisal indicates that all approaches considered would have the same neutral effect in terms of sustainability so this was not a deciding factor in selecting the preferred approach.

Alternative approaches

1. To not have a Local Plan sequential test policy and rely on national planning advice instead

This approach would mean that policies dealing with town centre uses and with flood risk would simply refer to the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance for how such a test would be undertaken by an applicant. The advantage of this would be the simplicity of referring to national advice but the disadvantage would be to not set out exactly how the Council expects a satisfactory sequential test to be done locally and what information is expected from an applicant.

2. Setting out the approach to undertaking a sequential test in separate town centre and flood risk policies

This would be the same as the preferred approach above except it would repeat the requirements for undertaking a sequential test, with minor technical differences, in separate town centre and flood risk policies. The advantage of this approach would be that slightly more detail could be given separately in relation to the differences in undertaking a town centre sequential test and a flood risk sequential test; the disadvantage would be it would result in a large degree of duplication.

The approach would set out the requirements for undertaking a sequential test, as set out by national advice (town centre uses and flood risk) but also applying the test locally for some other uses, namely:

- Affordable housing, employment uses and community facilities on Protected Land;
- Affordable Housing or Gypsy and Traveller sites in the Green Belt; and
- Accommodation for temporary agricultural / horticultural workers.

It would also set out the requirements to undertake a satisfactory sequential test in terms of area of search, comprehensiveness or search, availability /viability / deliverability of sequentially preferable sites and site suitability. The advantage of this approach would be to assist in the sustainable location of these additional uses. The disadvantage would be additional information requirements being placed upon an applicant with probable minimal benefits in terms of sustainable development.

Your Views

1. Which of the above approaches is your preference in relation to sequential tests? (please tick)

a. The Council's Preferred Approach - Amend existing Local Plan Policy GN5

☐

b. Alternative Approach no.1 – to not have a local plan sequential tests policy

☐

c. Alternative Approach no.2 – a sequential test in separate town centre and flood risk policies

☐

d. Alternative Approach no.3 – existing Local Plan Policy GN5: Sequential Tests

☐

e. Other (please explain and give more details)

☐

2. Is there anything in our preferred approach that you particularly support (or disagree with)?

3. Do you have any other comments on this topic e.g. are there any issues we've not mentioned?

Links

< Existing Local Plan Policy GN5: Sequential Tests >

National Planning Policy Framework, Sections 7 (Ensuring the vitality of town centres) and 14 (Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change):

< Consultation and the policies 'homepages' >

OT02 – VIABILITY

Why is a policy needed?

Housing and other new development can provide or help provide 'knock-on' benefits such as improved open space, nature conservation features, transport links, regeneration, and certain other infrastructure. It may be argued that new development should always provide such 'benefits' in order to compensate for the effects of extra people and their day-to-day activities. Some of the benefits are non-negotiable – for example, 'biodiversity net gain' is expected to be required by law.

National planning policy gives a high priority to ensuring schemes are viable, and planning must not be seen to be preventing development and investment. This means the Local Plan is constrained in terms of what it can ask for, without making schemes unviable.

In one sense, it is too early to draw up a preferred viability approach at present. We need to carry out a full viability assessment of all draft proposed Local Plan. Knowing the relative costs of the requirements of other draft policies (e.g. affordable housing, nature improvements, energy and water efficiency) can help us work out which set of requirements the Plan should contain, and which we could not achieve.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?

1 NO POVERTY

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Our preferred approach

Set out a 'hierarchy of viability'

The (expected) preferred policy approach would be to set out a general 'hierarchy of viability', reflecting the Local Plan's overall priorities. This means 'ranking' the different things we would like as a consequence of new developments (in particular housing developments). In certain circumstances, the policy could allow for some variation area by area, or scheme-type by scheme-type.

The policy would also include more general wording on viability that could apply to developments other than housing.

In addition, the policy would also cover what the Council would expect an applicant to demonstrate when they propose a use that is not in line with Local Plan policy. This would be a similar policy to policy GN4 of the current West Lancashire Local Plan ('WLLP'). Policy GN4 requires the applicant to show either that continuing with the current use would not be viable, or that the land or premises is no longer suitable for the existing use, or that marketing shows no demand for the existing use.

The benefits of this policy approach are that it sets out clearly what the Council expects (or prefers) to be delivered alongside new housing (or other development), but allows for some flexibility. It also makes clear what the Council expects to be proved when someone proposes a use on a site that the Local Plan would not normally support. The Sustainability Appraisal concludes that the above policy approach is more sustainable than the alternatives listed below.

Alternative approaches

<u>1. Have a very rigid policy</u>

This policy would either be Borough-wide, or would set out different standards for different parts of the Borough. It would only allow the set 'hierarchy of viability' to be followed with no variation from it. In the second part of the policy, when proposing uses not in line with LP policy, applicants would have to meet much stricter criteria than those in the preferred policy approach (and also stricter than current WLLP policy GN4).

The advantage of this approach would be clarity for developers in knowing what is expected of them. The disadvantage is the lack of flexibility – we may only get the item at the top of the 'viability hierarchy' and nothing else. Also the stricter standards in the second part of the policy may stifle some development.

<u>2. Have a more relaxed policy</u>

This policy would essentially allow applicants to choose the desirable outcomes they want, scheme by scheme, with very few or even no criteria to be satisfied. In the second part of the policy, the criteria to be met (when proposing uses not in line with Local Plan policy) would be less strict than current WLLP policy GN4.

The advantage of this approach would be greater flexibility for developers, potentially helping encourage investment in West Lancashire. The disadvantages could be a lack of control by the Council in securing necessary benefits from new development, and in preventing losses of 'desired uses' (as it would be easier to change to other uses not supported by other Plan policies).

Your Views

What approach should the Local Plan take towards viability?

- **Rank the things we want 'off the back' of new development, but allow for some flexibility**
- **Rank the things we want, and have no flexibility**
- **Do not rank the things we want – allow developers to choose**
- **A different approach (please describe below what this would be)**

What things should the Council look to gain 'off the back' of new development (e.g. affordable housing, open space…)? Please list them in order of importance, starting with the most important

When someone want to change use to something not supported, or not encouraged by the Local Plan (e.g. to close a community facility and convert it to housing), how strict should our policy be?

- **As strict as at present (West Lancashire Local Plan policy GN4)** <please provide link to this>
- **Less strict than as at present**
- **Stricter than as at present**

If you wish to comment on this, please use the box below

Do you have any other comments on this topic?

Links

< West Lancashire Local Plan >

< WLLP policy GN4 >

< Policies / consultation >

OT03 – DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS

Why is a policy needed?

All development, regardless of its size and scale, places additional demands on community services and facilities. Whilst some of the costs of providing new, or improved, infrastructure will be met by the public/third sectors, for example utility companies, some of it should be provided by developers. Developer contributions are an important tool in securing financial contributions, and typically fall as two types – the Community Infrastructure Levy and planning obligations (also known as Section 106s). Developer contributions can then be used by the Council to deliver improvements, whether across the Borough or specific to a local development site.

What UN Sustainable Development Goals does this policy contribute to?
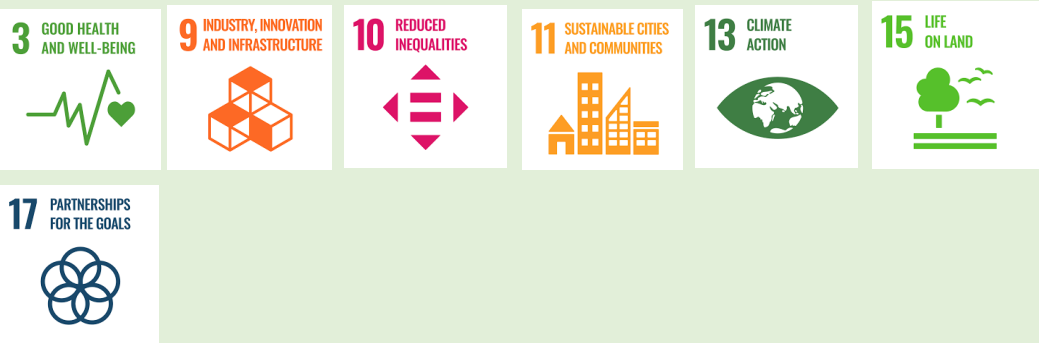
Our preferred approach

To follow the current approach of requiring certain developments to provide a development contribution towards funding or delivering new infrastructure requirements.

This approach would set out how, where and when developer contributions would be expected. In line with national planning guidance, formulaic approaches to planning obligations may, ultimately, also be set within the policy. Developer contributions would then enable the Council to deliver new, or, improved infrastructure – including public open spaces, footpaths, cyclepaths and public realm. The charges set would need to be informed by evidence (viability studies). However, requiring developer contributions could make it harder to deliver things like affordable housing, biodiversity improvements or energy efficiency improvements in new buildings, because of the impacts all those multiple demands could place on financial viability.

The Council's Sustainability Appraisal considered that this option would, whilst representing the position in the current Local Plan (the baseline), be the most sustainable because it would require certain developments to provide a contribution to infrastructure, thereby helping to provide for the needs of communities.

Alternative approach

1. To not have a policy requiring developer contributions.

This approach would not require developers to make any financial contributions to funding community infrastructure. It would mean the full burden would fall on public/third parties, who may not have the monies available to be able to deliver any improvements, meaning that local needs may not be met. However, it could make it easier to deliver things like affordable housing, biodiversity improvements or energy efficiency improvements in new buildings, because it would be one less demand placed on development viability.

Your Views

Do you support the principle of developer contributions?

- **Yes**
- **No**

Comments…

What would you say are the main issues relating to developer contributions?

What approach do you most closely support?

- **Current policy approach**
- **Have no policy**
- **Other (please provide details)**

Is there anything in our policy approaches that you particularly support (or disagree with)?

Do you have any other comments on this topic?

Links

< Evidence >

< Consultation / policies home page>