

West Lancashire Local Plan Review Issues & Options Consultation



Social Policy Options Paper February 2017



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Within a Local Plan, many of the policies that are ultimately included affect the social aspect of sustainability. Such policies often also have environmental and / or economic impacts, but the thrust of them is about protecting or providing for different sections of society. As such, this topic paper, which sits under the Strategic Development Options Paper, looks at different groups of people that live, work and spend leisure time in West Lancashire and considers the kind of planning issues that might affect them and policy options for addressing those issues. Using such general groupings of people never gives the full picture, and never truly reflects an individual within the group, because all people are different, but looking at these groups helps identify those issues which are common to a group, or groups, of people and so should be addressed, if possible, by the Local Plan.
- 1.2 A key issue for all parts of society is the provision of somewhere safe and secure to live and this therefore is often a key component of a Local Plan, generating the most interest from residents, landowners and developers alike, and usually involving the greatest amount of land take. Options for housing in relation to overall numbers and broad locations are set out and discussed in the Strategic Development Options Paper and so this topic paper will not comment further on housing numbers or the spatial distribution of the numbers but the following key issues have been identified in the Spatial Portrait Paper in relation to housing, and planning policy can help to address some of these:
- Affordability of housing is an issue for West Lancashire (and elsewhere), the median house price being almost 7 times the median earnings;
 - The ageing population will lead to a need for a range of suitable housing to meet older people's specific needs, and in appropriate locations;
 - There are differences in housing market strength within the Borough, with parts performing less well than other areas;
 - There is a lack of authorised / suitable accommodation in the Borough for the travelling community, with current sites predominately unauthorised;
 - There is a demand for student accommodation in Ormskirk; and
 - There is a demand, albeit small, for Self- and Custom-Build Housing and for residential caravans or houseboats.
- 1.3 The issues of accommodation for the ageing population, for students and for travellers are covered below in the topic-specific sections but the remaining three issues are addressed under the Working Age Population section.

2. The Working age Population

- 2.1 The population in West Lancashire is expected to increase from 111,900 in 2014 to 116,200 by 2037 representing an increase of 3.8% or additional 4,300 residents on 2014 levels. This will include a significant increase in the aged population but both a proportionate and numerical decrease in the working age population. Economic dependency upon the working age population will therefore increase. There are likely to be proportionately more older workers given the increase in retirement age and the national trend towards people working into their senior years in order to supplement income and / or maintain lifestyles. This may require opportunities for retraining during the course of a career to enable individuals to develop new skills.
- 2.2 West Lancashire currently has economic activity rates below both the regional and national averages which is partly explained by the presence of a significant student population. Conversely, historically unemployment rates have been below regional and national levels on a consistent basis. Whilst female economic activity is comparable to the national average, male rates are below with geographical concentrations of economic inactivity in Skelmersdale. However, significantly higher proportions of the Borough's economically inactive indicate that they would like to work compared to the regional and national rates and this represents an underused resource. The Borough possesses higher proportions of lower skilled occupations than either nationally or regionally, greater proportions of middle skill occupations and comparatively lower proportions of workers employed in higher skilled managerial, professional, associate professional and technical occupations compared to national rates. In order to meet business needs and attract inward investment there must be an available, qualified and skilled workforce otherwise jobs may be less easily filled, workers will need to commute in from outside the area or as a worst case existing businesses may leave the Borough.
- 2.3 The Borough's population is also less well qualified than the national average with proportionately less people educated to NVQ levels 2, 3, 4 and above (equivalent to GCSE grades A-C and education beyond that level) yet conversely the Borough contains Edge Hill University and West Lancashire College. It is important that there are employment opportunities available locally to retain the educated population as they enter the workforce.
- 2.4 West Lancashire has strong economic links with surrounding areas which is reflected by sizable inward and outward commuter flows. A higher proportion of residents commute to work by car than the regional and national averages which reflects the lower availability of public transport options compared to more urban areas. The Spatial Portrait Paper also identified a lack of opportunity for rail commuting from Skelmersdale as there are no railway stations and this limits mobility and the accessibility of economic opportunities to residents and reinforces an inequality gap.
- 2.5 All of the above issues are discussed in other topic papers (particularly the Economic Policy Options Paper). However, a further important factor in attracting and retaining people of working age in the Borough is the provision of suitable residential accommodation in terms of quantity, quality and type, not least because an established resident working age population also has wider benefits for the local economy in terms of supporting local businesses such as shops, restaurants and services by spending

income locally. The remainder of this section will therefore consider the issue of residential accommodation.

- 2.6 There will be a range of types of housing needed during a person's working life including starter homes, family accommodation and potentially smaller housing to enable downsizing. It is therefore important that there are suitable opportunities to get on the housing ladder but also to remain within the area as an individual's housing need changes. As such, the issues of provision of affordable housing, providing other, alternative forms of residential accommodation and providing a greater choice of housing in the Skelmersdale housing market in particular are important for the Local Plan Review to address.



Social Policy Issue 1: Affordable Housing

- 2.7 Housing affordability is a longstanding issue, not just in West Lancashire but nationwide. Not only are house prices high and rising but (owing to changes in national policy, the weight given to viability matters, and macro-economic issues such as austerity, recession and Brexit) the Council's ability to procure affordable housing, either from 100% affordable schemes, or in conjunction with market housing developments, has been significantly curtailed. Thus the Council are operating in a difficult environment as far as facilitating or delivering affordable housing is concerned and, as a consequence, in recent years the delivery of affordable housing in West Lancashire has been below the annual need.
- 2.8 Further changes are also afoot, most notably with the introduction of 'starter homes' which, although priced at below market value, are not affordable in perpetuity. If, as expected, priority is given in national policy to starter homes over other types of affordable housing, the Council's capacity to deliver genuine affordable housing is further reduced, as the starter homes will account for much of the 'budget' available for affordable housing from market housing schemes.



- 2.9 The usual policy stance in West Lancashire and elsewhere with regard to affordable housing has been to require that a percentage of properties in market housing developments above a certain threshold (the government imposed a national threshold of 11 units in 2014) be 'affordable', the definition of affordable being set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. The percentage can be varied if agreed viability figures demonstrate that the policy requirement would make a scheme unviable. 100% affordable housing developments can also be encouraged, either through permissive planning policies (including allowing affordable housing on land where market housing would not be permitted), or through site-specific allocations.
- 2.10 In order that the benefits of affordable housing be available not just to the first occupiers of a particular affordable property, but also to subsequent occupiers, West Lancashire Borough Council's stance has been to require via legal agreements that affordable units be affordable 'in perpetuity'.
- 2.11 As set out above, the Council's ability to procure and therefore deliver affordable housing has been undermined through national policy changes, and any affordable housing policy will be constrained by the findings of the Council's forthcoming affordable housing needs study, and by government policy on Starter Homes (not yet published at the time of writing this Issues and Options document).
- 2.12 Since the adoption of the current affordable housing policy, the 'affordable rent' tenure has become more prevalent, and local planning authorities' powers to insist on 'social rent' tenure have diminished, as has the willingness of Registered Providers to provide

it given nationally set rent reductions on social rented properties and the introduction of the Right To Buy on Registered Provider-owned properties.

2.13 One other factor to consider is the Council's introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) charging schedule in September 2014. CIL is chargeable on new dwellings in all parts of the Borough except Skelmersdale. Whilst the charge was calculated to take into account the costs associated with affordable housing and other policy requirements, the Council will need to review whether the current CIL charges are still appropriate in light of any new or updated policy requirements in the new Local Plan and the general viability of development in West Lancashire at that time.

2.14 Taking account of the above constraints, the options for policy in respect of affordable housing are set out below. Apart from the 'do nothing' option, the different approaches are not mutually exclusive.

- 1) *Do nothing, i.e. have no policy on affordable housing. Given the affordable housing needs in the Borough, and the minimal likelihood that developers will come forward 'unprompted' with affordable housing schemes, this is not considered a realistic option.*
- 2) *Continue with the 'usual' approach to affordable housing policy, i.e. to require that a percentage of units in market housing developments over a certain threshold be affordable. Whilst this approach has not historically delivered enough affordable housing to meet annual needs, it is considered that it is the most appropriate way to procure affordable housing outside of site-*

specific allocations (see 5 below), or the Council itself building the housing (see following section), and is a well-established and nationwide approach.

3) *If the 'percentage approach' is followed, carry on with a broadly similar policy to policy RS2 of the West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027, i.e.*

i. Geographical variation: one set of affordable housing percentage requirements for Skelmersdale, another for the rest of the Borough, on account of the differences in market strength between the two areas, the desirability of investment in the Borough's largest town, and the fact that there are already a good number of cheaper and social rented properties in Skelmersdale. The alternative, a 'blanket' requirement, is likely to result in a lower likelihood of market housing developments in Skelmersdale on account of viability and market factors.

ii. Numerical variation: the percentage requirements increase as the development size increases, in line with viability assessments, and on account of factors such as economies of scale. The alternative, a 'blanket' percentage requirement would either impact disproportionately upon smaller or medium housebuilders (high requirement for lower numbers), or would result in a 'missed chance' with large developments (a requirement lower than it could justifiably be set).

4) *An affordable housing policy that contains more detail (covering such matters as tenure, size, accessibility standards, on/off-site provision, viability considerations, etc.). Being part of the*

Local Plan Review DPD, these detailed policies would have greater weight, but it would be difficult to change them were circumstances to change over the 15+ year plan period. The alternative is to leave the details to a supplementary planning document (SPD); as such, the detailed policies may have lesser weight, but could more easily be adapted to changing circumstances.

- 5) *Allocate specific sites for 100% affordable housing schemes¹. This would provide more certainty over numbers and locations, but there is no guarantee such sites would be delivered.*
- 6) *Include 'permissive' policies for affordable housing, i.e. allowing affordable housing in areas where market housing would not usually be permitted, for example 'very limited' affordable housing in the Green Belt, or 'small scale' affordable housing on non-Green Belt land outside settlement boundaries, and affordable housing developments in the smallest rural settlements. Such an approach recognises the pressing need for affordable housing in many rural areas, balancing this need against the general undesirability of housing in less sustainable locations.*
- 7) *Provide a more flexible approach to how affordable housing is delivered with market housing developments. Except in exceptional circumstances, the current policy RS2 requires the set percentage of affordable housing in a market development to be provided on-site. However, the policy could be made more flexible (and so viable in some circumstances) by allowing the delivery of affordable off-site, or allowing a financial payment to be made to the Council in lieu of the provision of affordable, which the Council would then use to*

provide affordable housing. This can make the delivery of affordable housing more challenging in some circumstances, and places the onus on the Council to facilitate or make the provision (which has resource costs for the Council), but it can make the delivery of the market housing development easier.

- 8) *Have greater flexibility in what the Council defines as affordable housing. Some developers offer a housing product as standard which is significantly more affordable than market housing but which cannot be classified as "affordable housing" under the national definition in the NPPF. In such instances, greater flexibility in the Local Plan policy may facilitate the delivery of good developments which provide an affordable housing product.*

Summary

Social Policy Issue 1 discusses affordable housing, do you have comments on this issue? If so, answer the question below in our **Issue & Options Survey**.

Which option(s) for the approach towards affordable housing policy do you think is (are) the most appropriate for West Lancashire? Why?

¹ In terms of the local planning authority's need / ability to allocate sites for 100% 'starter homes', government policy is currently awaited.

Social Policy Issue 2: Demand for self- and custom-build housing

2.15 The profile of self- and custom-build housing ('SCB housing') continues to rise, with recently enacted legislation requiring local authorities to register demand for plots for such housing, and to make adequate provision of sites and / or serviced plots to meet the identified local demand. The Council at present has only a small number (fewer than 20) registered as wanting a self- or custom-build plot in the Borough.



2.16 SCB housing can take various forms, from individual houses designed and built in their entirety by their occupant, through 'grand design' type properties (often replacement dwellings) effectively 'project managed' by their occupant, and built by tradespeople, to 'mainstream' properties built by volume housebuilders with certain internal details chosen by the occupant.

2.17 The policy options for meeting demand for SCB housing are as follows:

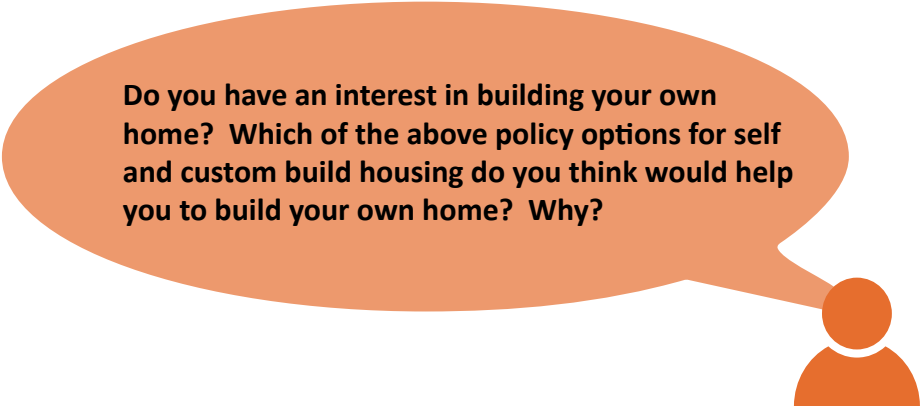
- 1) *Do not allocate any sites for SCB housing as such, but allow such housing to be commissioned on allocated housing sites (as per the third form of SCB described in the paragraph above) via volume housebuilders. This could be achieved by means of a policy requirement, or on a more informal basis. Any policy requirement may be difficult to justify given current low indications of demand from the Council's SCB Register (unless these figures were demonstrated to be significant underestimates). A more informal 'laissez faire' approach would depend on the whims of individual housebuilders for SCB housing to be provided. Such an approach would be likely only to deliver custom-build housing of a limited variety, rather than the wider range of SCB housing. However, other types of SCB housing may still come forward under this option via individual 'windfall' planning applications.*
- 2) *Set aside a part of larger allocated housing sites for SCB plots. This would be achieved through an appropriate policy requirement (e.g. 3% or 5% of the overall site capacity) and could involve a requirement that the site developer provide serviced plots*

for the SCB dwellings. As with Option 1, this approach would require robust demand data to justify the policy requirement. It is the Council's understanding that a 'percentage of large sites' approach is unpopular with developers, who perceive it as affecting marketability of the rest of the site.

- 3) *Identify and allocate small sites for SCB dwellings in line with demand. Such sites could be identified via a Call for Sites exercise(s), or via the Council's own evidence base work (including liaison with the WLBC Estates Department and the potential sale of small Council-owned sites for self / custom builders). The allocation of small sites specifically for SCB would provide certainty of demand being met in numerical terms, and need not rule out other sites coming forward via 'windfall' planning applications.*

Summary

Social Policy Issue 2 discusses how opportunities for self and custom build housing could be facilitated. If you have views on this answer the following question in our **Issues & Options Survey**.



Do you have an interest in building your own home? Which of the above policy options for self and custom build housing do you think would help you to build your own home? Why?

Social Policy Issue 3: Demand for alternative residential accommodation

2.18 In addition to bricks and mortar dwellings, residential accommodation can comprise caravans (sometimes referred to as “Park Homes”) or houseboats. According to the 2011 Census, there were 1,056 dwellings in West Lancashire (2.2% of all dwellings in the Borough) that comprised “caravans or other mobile or temporary structures.” The Census does not differentiate between the different types of such accommodation, i.e. between caravans and houseboats. There are a number of residential caravan sites in the Borough, the largest of which are at Banks and Scarisbrick. There are also three canal marinas, two at Rufford and one at Scarisbrick, and several mooring points and while these cannot be used for the permanent mooring of residential boats, the majority of the moorings will be used by people who spend the majority of the year at those marinas, and so there is a residential need being accommodated at these marinas.



2.19 Draft government guidance issued in March 2016 recommends that local authorities measure need for caravan and houseboat-based accommodation (including accommodation for the travelling community; this is covered above), and that once such needs are known, consider how to meet the identified needs. The needs can be met through the socially or commercially rented sectors, or through private ownership of sites and / or accommodation.

2.20 Data is not currently available on demand for houseboat or [non-traveller] caravan accommodation in West Lancashire, although it is intended to do a needs assessment over coming months. Need / demand are not expected to be significant in West Lancashire. In terms of meeting identified needs, the policy options are:

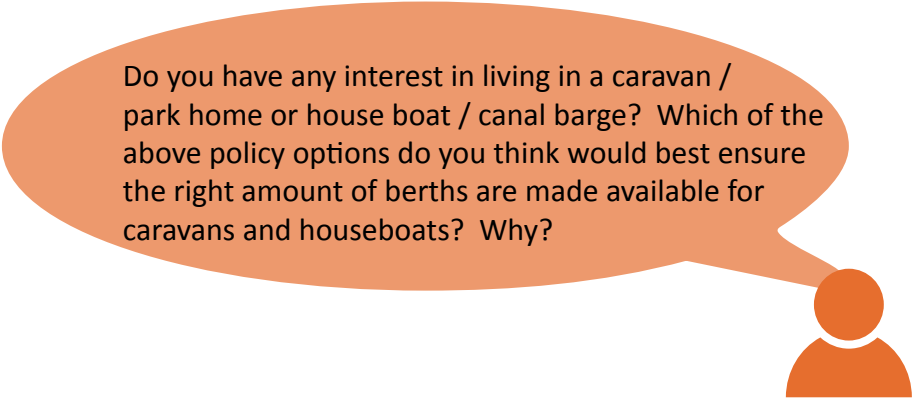
- 1) *Do nothing – allow the market to provide the accommodation through management of existing caravan sites and planning applications for expansion or intensification of sites. Given caravan sites are most likely to be situated in the Green Belt, there is no guarantee that such planning applications will be successful. This approach would not enable the ‘planning’ of locations, and development may occur in more unsustainable areas than under a ‘site allocations’ option.*
- 2) *Allocate new sites, or land on the edge of existing sites, for additional caravan-based accommodation and mooring berths. Such an option would enable the Council to select more sustainable locations than under Option 1. As with Option 1, given the likelihood of sites being in Green Belt locations, this approach may involve the re-designation*

of Green Belt land (which would require exceptional circumstances to be demonstrated), or a permissive 'non-conforming use in the Green Belt' type policy (Option 3).

- 3) *As above, vary local Green Belt policy on a site-specific basis, to allow for expansion or intensification of residential caravan sites or mooring berths to meet identified need for such accommodation in West Lancashire. Given Green Belt policy is set out at national level in the NPPF, such a policy would require robust evidence and justification to be found sound.*

Summary

Social Policy Issue 3 focuses on West Lancashire's demand for alternative forms of accommodation such as caravans and houseboats. Is this something of interest to you? If so, answer the question in the our **Issues & Options Survey**.



Do you have any interest in living in a caravan / park home or house boat / canal barge? Which of the above policy options do you think would best ensure the right amount of berths are made available for caravans and houseboats? Why?

Social Policy Issue 4: the Skelmersdale housing market

- 2.21 The housing market in most parts of West Lancashire is considered good; the Borough is an attractive place to live, and properties tend to sell easily. However, the market in much of Skelmersdale is considered weaker by some developers. The regeneration of Skelmersdale, in particular the town centre, has been a longstanding priority in the planning for West Lancashire, featuring in strategic policies in the three Borough-wide plans prepared to date, and, given the issues that continue to face the Borough's largest town, looks set to remain a high priority in the Local Plan Review.
- 2.22 In recognition of the issues concerning the relative weakness of the housing market in parts of Skelmersdale compared to other parts of the Borough, a number of policies or initiatives are already in place. For example, affordable housing requirements are lower in the town and the Community Infrastructure Levy has a zero charge in the built-up area of Skelmersdale. In 2016, the Council adopted three Local Development Orders on sites in Skelmersdale, effectively granting planning permission for residential development, thereby reducing an element of risk associated with bringing forward development proposals on the site and increasing its attractiveness to developers. One policy option is to further relax the policy requirements associated with residential development in the town to give development there a significant 'advantage' over other parts of the Borough. The disadvantage of such an approach is the potential for development that impacts upon the local area / infrastructure whilst doing little to contribute towards necessary improvements to mitigate the impacts.
- 2.23 In preparing the West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027, it was originally intended to direct a higher proportion (over half) of the

overall housing requirement to Skelmersdale but the eventual allocation was a little less than half the housing requirement of the Borough primarily as a result of concerns over the delivery of some sites around the Town Centre. However, greenfield sites on or adjacent to the edge of the settlement are considered more deliverable in general and such sites are now coming forward for development.

- 2.24 A number of the Strategic Development Options would require the allocation of significant amounts of development land in or beside Skelmersdale. One way to aid the deliverability of such options is for West Lancashire Borough Council to build the houses themselves (via a 'Development Company'). This option is currently being explored.² Whilst the formation of a development company is not a policy option per se, its existence will help to demonstrate the deliverability (and therefore 'soundness') of any policy option that involves significant development in or adjacent to Skelmersdale. In addition, the Council will continue to work with developers, landowners and the HCA to de-risk development sites and facilitate the delivery of infrastructure to support new development.



² See <http://www.westlancs.gov.uk/news/september-news-2016/council-considers-development-company-proposal.aspx>

2.25 The more general policy options in relation to the issue of relative market weakness in Skelmersdale are therefore:

- 1) *Continue to relax, or further relax policy requirements for housing sites in Skelmersdale. This option could include such measures as a lower (or zero) affordable housing requirement, exemption from the Community Infrastructure Levy, and the reduction or waiving of developer contributions towards open space. The result of these relaxations should be to make sites more viable to develop. However, relaxation of the 'usual' policy requirements would result in fewer wider 'community benefits' arising from housing developments in the town.*
- 2) *Base the Local Plan Review strategy on the regeneration and expansion of Skelmersdale, or at least give this policy objective significant weight, having regard to the Council's formation of a development company to ensure delivery of the required development. So, for example, this approach could see the allocation of many / large sites in and around Skelmersdale for significant amounts of residential and employment development, as well as for associated infrastructure (roads, schools, open space, etc.). As such, this policy option would tie in most closely with 'Scenario 4' (focus on Skelmersdale) of the Strategic Development Options for the Borough.*

Summary

Social Policy Issue 4 discusses the housing market within Skelmersdale. What do you think about this? Answer the question below in our **Issues & Options Survey**.

Which policy option for addressing the issue of relative market weakness in Skelmersdale do you think is the most appropriate? Why?



3. An Ageing Population

3.1 A key issue identified in the Spatial Portrait Paper is the ageing of the West Lancashire population, in particular the very significant increases in the proportion of people aged 75 and over, coupled with a decrease in the working age population. This change in the demographic make-up of West Lancashire is likely to result in increased demand for housing (as people live longer and in smaller households), health care, other services, and appropriate training / employment for the older population. The corresponding proportional decrease in working age persons able to contribute towards providing such services will have implications for job growth requirements, commuting levels, and general housing provision.

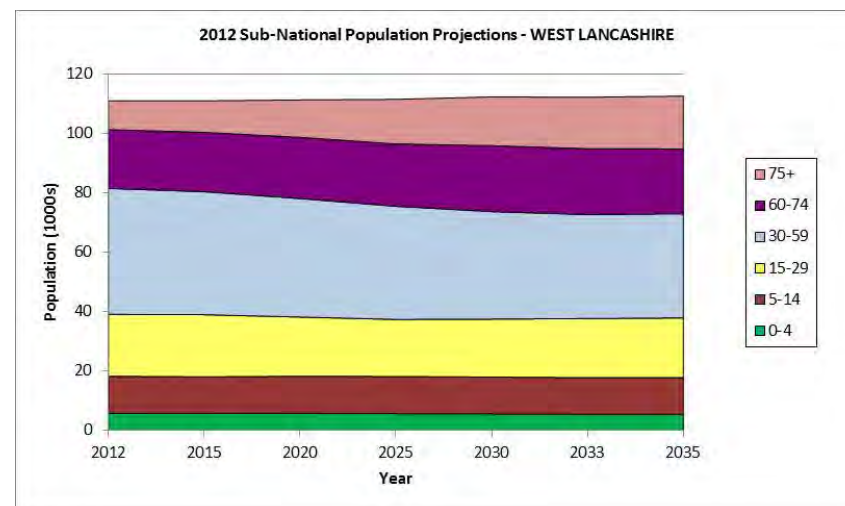
3.2 The current evidence available to the Council on the ageing population of the Borough is summarised in the Council's document, 'An Ageing Population in West Lancashire', available on the Council's website.³ This draws from a variety of sources, including national statistics (2011 Census) and publications, through to more local studies.

3.3 The local evidence on the ageing population of West Lancashire can be summarised as follows:

- Whilst the West Lancashire population is projected to increase by 3.6% between 2014 and 2037, the 60-74 age group is projected to grow by 5.5%, the 75+ age group by 77%, and the 85-89 and 90+ age group by even higher percentages. The percentage increases for the older population in West Lancashire are higher than for Lancashire, the North West, and England, meaning

that the Borough could see more marked effects of an ageing population than elsewhere.

- As the population lives longer, the number of people with health / disability issues is expected to increase.⁴ For example, in West Lancashire in 2030, 7.0% of men and 9.7% of women aged over 65 are expected to be living with dementia.
- In 2014, 17.6% of people aged 65 or over in West Lancashire were estimated to be unable to manage at least one mobility activity⁵ on their own. By 2030 this is projected to increase to 20.2%. Lack of mobility can lead to social isolation, depression and a poor quality of life.



³ See <http://www.westlancs.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/the-local-plan/local-plan-review.aspx>

⁴ 'Healthy life expectancy' (number of years during which an individual's health is generally good) is approximately 15-20 years shorter than 'general life expectancy', implying that many people will spend their later years in poorer health.

⁵ Mobility activities include going out of doors, walking down the road, getting up/down stairs, moving around the house and getting in and out of bed.

- In 2014, 22% of West Lancashire's population over 75 were estimated to be living alone; by 2030, it is predicted that the percentage will have risen to 26%.^{3.4}.

3.4 In addition to the West Lancashire-specific statistics referred to above, there is a plethora of studies and reports on the elderly and their requirements. Specific local evidence that could be useful to inform policies and strategies to address issues associated with the ageing population in West Lancashire would include:

- How is the housing market reacting to the ageing population – how many dwellings for the elderly are being delivered?
- Is there any evidence of a changing housing market, i.e. a tangible increasing demand for properties for older people?
- Are developers starting to build properties for older people 'as a matter of course' or do they still need a 'policy prompt'?
- Is there a market for appropriate smaller properties for 'downsizers'?
- What are the most successful forms of development for older people (retirement villages / care homes / sheltered housing / individual adaptable dwellings)?
- What works better for older people's accommodation – segregation or integration? How well does 'society' look after the older people in their midst?

3.5 The remainder of this section looks at issues stemming from the ageing of the population, and explores policy options for addressing the issues.⁶ The topics come under two broad headings: social (health, services, accessibility) requirements of older people, and residential accommodation for older people.



⁶ The exception is the macro-economic issue of ensuring there are enough workers to the Borough to support the needs of the older population, either directly – for example through provision of services, or indirectly – for example through the taxes and national insurance contributions they pay. This matter is addressed elsewhere in this Issues and Options Paper.

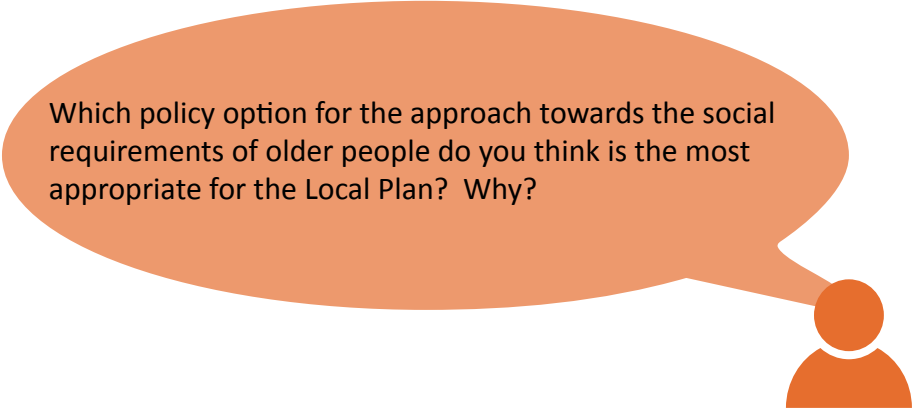
Social Policy Issue 5: The social requirements of older people

- 3.6 It needs to be borne in mind that the term 'older people' may be defined in different ways – over-55s, over 75s, over 80s... As such, the needs of this potentially very broad group may vary markedly. Some 'older people' may still be working, others retired but fit and active, others frail or with severely limiting health problems. Speaking generically, 'older people' have a number of self-evident requirements – they should be able to access facilities (not least health care), services, and social networks; they should be able to engage with their local or closest communities; they should have access to public and / or private transport; they should have appropriate employment and training opportunities; they should feel safe and supported.
- 3.7 Matters such as the precise nature of health care are beyond the remit of this document. However, planning policy can affect older people's ease of access to health and other facilities, services, and social opportunities, by influencing where residential accommodation is located (covered below), and, to a lesser extent, where and how community, health, social and other facilities are located.
- 3.8 For non-housebound older people, facilities should be easily accessible, either close to their accommodation, or easy to access by (in decreasing order of preference) foot / bicycle / mobility scooter, public transport, taxi, or private motor vehicle. Retail facilities, town centres and public transport can be made more accessible to a wider range of people (e.g. via safe and attractive car parking, "shopmobility" schemes, convenient and easily accessible buses, etc.).
- 3.9 Options for policies relating to the social requirements of older people are as follows:
- 1) *A general 'sustainable development' policy. Such a policy would direct facilities and services to areas where other facilities and services already exist (town, village and local centres), and / or to locations with good public transport connections, whilst restricting such development elsewhere. A policy of this nature would not guarantee delivery of services – that would depend on appropriate proposals coming forward via planning applications. Neither is it clear whether it would be beyond reasonable planning powers to 'forbid' certain facilities and services outside the designated areas.*
 - 2) *Allocate specific sites in appropriate locations for services and facilities. This approach would be similar to Option 1 in directing facilities and services to specified locations. It would not guarantee delivery of such services but should provide more certainty as to what would be expected where.*
 - 3) *Prepare an Area Action Plan / Development Brief / Masterplan to develop or redevelop a large site (current urban site, or part of an urban extension or new settlement), grouping necessary facilities close to public transport hubs. Once again, this is a similar approach to Options 1 and 2, but should provide a little more certainty as to what would go where, and could result in a higher probability of development being delivered, depending on how the Action Plan / Masterplan is prepared (partners involved, etc.).*

- 3.10 The above approaches are considered acceptable in principle. However, it is usually the case that most necessary facilities and services already exist, and these may often be more 'scattered' in nature, and / or not accessible by public transport (for example out-of-centre retail). Furthermore, whilst planning policies can permit appropriate facilities and services, it is up to other bodies to provide them. Sometimes, it is possible for the local planning authority to liaise with such bodies (e.g. health and social care providers) to help ensure policy objectives are met; at other times, this is not possible.
- 3.11 Demographic evidence shows that there are many older people living in rural areas, away from services and public transport routes. Most, if not all, of these people will be independent and mobile, or cared for by younger family members, and may only move to more appropriate (urban) accommodation once rural living becomes impractical. The extent to which the Local Plan Review seeks to influence such patterns of lifestyle is a matter for debate - rural properties exist, and planning policy cannot dictate who may or may not live in them.

Summary

Social Policy Issue 5 discusses the social requirements for older people, do you think it is important planning should consider this? If so, answer the question in our **Issues & Options Survey**.



Which policy option for the approach towards the social requirements of older people do you think is the most appropriate for the Local Plan? Why?

Social Policy Issue 6: Residential accommodation for older people

- 3.12 As the number of older people increases, the need to address their specific accommodation requirements becomes greater. These requirements may include easy access to health and social care within specific residential developments, as is the case in care homes or 'retirement villages'. They may also include various features within the property that suit frailer, less dextrous, or less mobile people (for example wheelchair access, entry level bathroom, appropriate fittings and fixtures) or features within the development and its surrounding area to aid people with conditions such as dementia – for example, more 'legible' layouts of buildings or neighbourhoods.
- 3.13 It is expected that the housing market will, to an extent, deliver the kind of accommodation that older people desire, increasingly so as the population ages.⁷ However, the limited (largely anecdotal) West Lancashire-specific evidence to date indicates that the provision of suitable accommodation for the elderly, the frail elderly and the elderly with special needs is not yet receiving the priority it requires⁸, and that there is thus a need for a 'policy prompt' to facilitate the provision of sufficient suitable accommodation for the elderly.
- 3.14 Conversely, there is also anecdotal evidence that many older people are not necessarily looking for a purpose-built 'retirement property', but rather for an easily adaptable mainstream property that can meet their changing needs as they age. The Building for Life and Lifetime Homes standards (LHS) aimed to achieve this goal in new residential development.
- 3.15 The current West Lancashire Local Plan has sought to secure accommodation for the elderly via two policy mechanisms. Firstly, there is a requirement that all new dwellings meet the LHS, and secondly, that 20% of dwellings be designed specifically to accommodate the elderly in all schemes of 15 or more homes. This requirement gives considerable leeway to developers in interpreting the terms 'older people' and 'designed for the elderly'.
- 3.16 The LHS requirement was scrapped by the government in 2015 and replaced by new 'Technical Standards' which are part of the Building Regulations: M4(1), M4(2), and M4(3). M4(2) is broadly equivalent to the LHS; M4(3)⁹ is more stringent, relating to wheelchair accessibility. All new homes must comply with the basic M4(1); the local authority can also, if desired, and subject to adoption criteria, require adherence to M4(2) and also M4(3). If such a course of action is pursued, every new dwelling would have to comply with the standards. In deciding whether or not to adopt M4(2) or M4(3), the local authority must weigh up the expected extra cost to developers (and consequent likelihood of a reduction in housing delivery) against the benefits of having accessible and adaptable new houses.

⁷ When this subject is raised, parties typically refer to 'bungalows'. However, the types of suitable accommodation is far wider ranging than just bungalows and care homes.

⁸ This may be the case more generally. For example, the report 'Designing with downsizers' (University of Sheffield / Dwell, 2016), highlights an unmet demand for smaller properties suitable for old people to move into and 'downsize'.

⁹ See <http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/housing-optional-technical-standards/>

3.17 The policy options, as far as residential accommodation for older people is concerned, are set out below. The options are not all mutually exclusive:

- 1) *Have no specific policy, but let the market deliver appropriate accommodation in line with local demand. Considering patterns of development in West Lancashire over the past decade, such an approach may result in care homes, age-specific retirement homes¹⁰, and possibly extra care facilities, but is unlikely to deliver significant numbers of highly adaptable or accessible dwellings.*
- 2) *Continue with the 'percentage approach' of the current Local Plan, either with a 20% requirement, or a higher or lower percentage. For larger site allocations, this is likely to deliver stand-alone care home type facilities; for medium size developments, it may result in a small number of adaptable dwellings 'pepper-potted' through schemes.*
- 3) *In conjunction with the above, provide a tighter definition of what constitutes 'housing designed specifically to accommodate the elderly' (what types of housing, what age of occupant). This would give developers more certainty, e.g. in terms of costs, but could remove flexibility, both for the developer and the Council, and lead to missed opportunities for certain sites, where a more innovative product may be more appropriate.*
- 4) *Adopt one or both of the optional Technical Standards for new houses. The justification for, and viability implications of, such an approach would need to be tested at examination. The presumed extra costs of meeting these standards may limit development*

in West Lancashire, or may result in other policy objectives (e.g. provision of affordable housing) being undermined. A variation of this option could be a requirement that a percentage of new dwellings meet one or both of the optional Technical Standards, i.e. that compliance with M4(2) and / or M4(3) is one of the Council's interpretations of what constitutes 'accommodation for the elderly'.

- 5) *Require adherence to, or at least that regard be had to, the HAPPI (Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation) Design Principles.¹¹ These principles are based on 10 key criteria; many reflect general good design (for example good light, ventilation, storage, room to move around), but are of particular relevance to older people's housing.*
- 6) *Allocate specific sites for elderly accommodation, whether that be age-restricted bungalows, sheltered accommodation, care homes, an extra care facility, or a full-blown 'retirement village'. Policy could specify the exact type of accommodation, or it could be left open.*
- 7) *Adopt the more general policy approach of promoting 'Lifetime Neighbourhoods', i.e. generating a variety of housing provision and range of support relevant to a spectrum of ages and stages in a family cycle. Such an approach may be difficult to enforce.*

¹⁰ E.g. 'McCarthy Stone' type developments

¹¹ See http://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/Design_building/HAPPI/ for the principles.

Summary

Social Policy Issue 6 addresses residential accommodation for older people. What are your thoughts on this? Answer the question below in our **Issues & Options Survey**.

As you get older, what kind of accommodation do you think you might want to live in? Which policy option(s) for providing accommodation for older people would you therefore prefer?



4. Young People & Children

- 4.1 Children and young people can reasonably be considered to be those of 19 years old and below. They form a significant portion of the population of West Lancashire with projected numbers anticipated to remain approximately static at between 25,500 and 26,000 between 2014 and 2037. This is an age group of transition where issues will change or vary in importance as younger children grow up to become teenagers and then adults. Even the youngest children at present will reach adulthood during the time period that the Local Plan will cover to 2037 or 2050 (either 20 years or 33 years from present). As such, issues that are currently relevant to a wider population such as employment (in terms of entering the workforce) and requiring somewhere to live (in terms of getting on to and moving along the housing ladder) will apply. Those matters are addressed by other sections of this or other topic papers.
- 4.2 The Lancashire Children's and Young People's Trust have identified priorities for West Lancashire as being:
- Reducing School Exclusions;
 - Narrowing the Gap in Educational Attainment;
 - Increasing the proportion of young people who are in employment, education and training;
 - Increasing the proportion of children and young people with a healthy weight;
 - Reducing risk taking behaviour; and
- Things to do and places to go.
- 4.3 Along with other service providers, the Local Plan can assist in educational provision and opportunities, facilitating healthy and active lifestyles and ensuring that facilities are provided for a range of activities. In this context, the repetition of inequality from one generation to the next needs to be broken to ensure more equitable life chances. Whilst 21.2% of children in West Lancashire are in poverty, which is less than the county, regional and national (28%) averages, there are significantly higher rates in Skelmersdale. This corresponds with geographical concentrations of other indicators of social and economic deprivation.
- 4.4 Primary schools in the Borough are generally of good quality with 20% being rated as outstanding, 3 as needing improvement and the remainder rated as good. In addition, all but one secondary school was rated as good. This is reflected by the performance of West Lancashire's pupils in achieving GCSEs better than regional and national averages. In addition, there are higher levels of those aged 16-18 years in education, employment and training in the Borough than county, regional and national averages. However, there are geographical inequalities in educational attainment with lower levels in Skelmersdale, which reduces employment prospects. It is important that the Local Plan assists in the provision of accessible, modern learning environments by being supportive of any needs for new or extended schools and colleges such as the new state of the art campus for West Lancashire College at Skelmersdale. Training in preparation for employment is dealt with in the following section Stimulating Economic Growth.

4.5 The provision of inadequate facilities or the wrong kind of services can contribute towards unhealthy life choices. The Local Plan can encourage healthy and active lifestyles at an early age by providing opportunities for play, other physical exercise and informal learning. It can also consider if potentially unhealthy eating choices should be restricted in certain locations, for example takeaways in proximity to schools.

These matters are important because obesity amongst children in West Lancashire in reception year and year 6 remains above the national and regional averages. Participation in physical activity can contribute towards improved self-esteem and confidence and in this regard levels of the latter are much lower amongst West Lancashire school children than across Lancashire as a whole.

4.6 The Council's Leisure Strategy includes an assessment of play areas and, separately, of playing pitches. It is important that the quantity and quality (including perceptions of safety) of these as well as other open spaces are protected by the Local Plan and that they are accessible at the local level as children and young people have lower personal mobility than the general population, relying upon walking, cycling, public transport or parents for travel. The difference in play requirements between the younger and older age groups needs to be acknowledged. The supply of local facilities in rural areas is of increased importance as this is where lower levels of personal mobility for younger people exist. Green corridors providing for safe cycling and walking between locations would encourage active travel.

4.7 The Local Plan also needs to ensure that built community facilities meet the needs of younger age groups and their service providers in order to provide a choice of activities. Most obviously this includes children's centres, of which there are 5 in the Borough, and leisure centres with similar issues in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility being relevant.

4.8 However, while all of the above is extremely important for the development of the children and young people in West Lancashire, at this stage it would not be appropriate to specify policy options on these issues as the provision of, for example, education facilities and open space and leisure facilities will be dependent on where new development is to be located. Therefore, the Council will continue to work with the providers of those services to ensure the Local Plan plans for the land requirements of those providers in light of the increased populations in each part of the Borough.



5. The Student & Graduate Population

- 5.1 Edge Hill University is a major employer in the Borough having grown significantly over the past two decades, and enjoys a good reputation nationally. Overall, it is considered that the University has a beneficial impact upon West Lancashire, making a significant contribution to the local economy through direct employment, the 'supply chain', and patronage of local businesses.¹²
- 5.2 However, Edge Hill's expansion in previous years has raised a number of issues, including the proliferation of student houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) in Ormskirk and seasonal traffic congestion in Ormskirk. The latter is an issue covered more in the Strategic Development Options Paper as part of a general discussion of highways and transport infrastructure and so this topic paper focuses more on the accommodation issue.
- 5.3 The Edge Hill University Estates Strategy (2009) contains an action plan for the development of the campus to 2020. This includes the creation of new built facilities, and the relocation of sports pitch facilities. The West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027 acknowledged there were 'exceptional circumstances' relating to the University's needs, and released 10ha of Green Belt land to accommodate the University's medium term development plans, consistent with the Estates Strategy. Planning permission was granted in 2012 for several hundred additional student bed spaces on the campus; these are now predominantly complete.
- 5.4 Work is underway to assess the need for future accommodation, looking at the current and consented amount of accommodation available for students, and projected student numbers over coming

years. The effect of changes in tuition funding and the existence of alternative opportunities to study at university on student numbers at Edge Hill will also be monitored.

- 5.5 The proliferation of HMOs in Ormskirk, in particular between 2000 and 2010, has had a number of effects on the area. The properties that have been converted to HMOs tend to be at the cheaper end of the housing market (for example terraced and smaller semi-detached houses).

This has resulted not only in a shortage of cheaper, more affordable properties for sale. In streets where the percentage of HMOs is high (15 streets have more than 20% HMOs), the character of the street can be changed by the number of students. Even at low percentages, the property(-ies) immediately adjacent to an HMO can be disproportionately affected.



¹² Edge Hill University – Economic Impact Report (Regeneris Consulting, April 2011). This study investigated the extent of the impact of EHU on West Lancashire, Merseyside, and the wider North West economies.

Social Policy Issue 7: Provision of HMOs in Ormskirk

- 5.6 The proliferation of HMOs has been a pressing local (Ormskirk area) issue for a number of years. Prior to 2012, the Council was unable to influence the spread of HMOs as planning permission was not required to convert a dwelling house to a (3-6 person) HMO. Recognising the problem, the Council implemented an Article 4 Direction covering Ormskirk, Aughton and Westhead in December 2011, the effect of which was to make it necessary to obtain planning permission to convert a house to a HMO. In conjunction with the Article 4 Direction, a Local Plan policy was introduced (as part of the current Local Plan adopted in October 2013) that limited the percentage of HMOs permissible on residential streets (policy RS3 of the West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027). The policy has largely been upheld at appeal.
- 5.7 Whilst this policy cannot influence the conversion of HMOs back to dwelling houses, it is considered it has successfully slowed the further spread of HMOs, not allowing any more HMOs on streets already over the specified percentage limit, and limiting the percentage of HMOs on most other streets to 5% or below.
- 5.8 However, it must always be remembered that HMOs are not just occupied by students, but are occupied by post-graduates, recent graduates and young professionals, among others. As such, the need for HMOs in Ormskirk is not just driven by students and, in fact, if West Lancashire is to retain graduates from Edge Hill in the area, there must be suitable and affordable provision of accommodation for them.
- 5.9 Therefore, in relation to HMOs, it is assumed that policy RS3 should continue in one form or another through the Local Plan Review, but in the three years that policy RS3 has been in existence, stakeholders

have suggested a variety of adjustments to the HMO aspect of policy RS3.

The following represent the key options open to consideration for this policy:

- 1) *Expand the 'Article 4 area' and the area to which the HMO percentage policy applies, to include neighbouring settlements, e.g. Burscough or Skelmersdale, or the whole of West Lancashire. This would mean that the spread of HMOs would be controlled not just in Ormskirk but further afield. Imposition of an Article 4 Direction is usually restricted to areas where there is a particular problem with a permitted development right (in this case, changing from a house to an HMO). Whilst one effect of policy RS3 has been to widen the area of search in which potential HMO landlords look to buy property, the Council has no evidence at present that there are pressing issues associated with HMOs in settlements outside the current Article 4 area.*
- 2) *Revoke the Article 4 Direction and policy RS3. This would allow a 'free-for-all' in terms of conversion of houses to HMOs. Such an option would be likely to ensure student accommodation needs are met in full, but would also be likely to greatly exacerbate the issues highlighted above, and have a significant detrimental effect upon the town.*
- 3) *Decrease the HMO limit from current levels on all or specific streets to a lower percentage, potentially even down to 0%. This change to policy would further restrict future HMOs. In preparing policy RS3, it was considered that a 5% limit (one HMO out of*

20 residential properties) was an acceptable balance between protecting residential amenity and meeting student and graduate accommodation needs and so there would need to be a very clear justification for further restriction.

- 4) Increase the HMO limit from current levels on all or specific streets to a higher percentage. This change would allow a more controlled relaxation compared to Option 2 and potentially allow for certain streets to take a higher proportion of HMOs.

Summary

Social Policy Issue 7 discusses the issues associated with the provision of HMOs in Ormskirk. What do you think about this? Answer the question below in our **Issues & Options Survey**.

Which key policy option with regard to the issue of control over HMOs in Ormskirk do you think is the most appropriate? Why? Are there any other policy options or minor changes that should also be considered?



Social Policy Issue 8: Provision of off-campus purpose-built student accommodation in Ormskirk

5.10 In addition to HMOs, students can be housed in purpose-built accommodation, either on-campus or off-campus. The provision of such accommodation on-campus is referred to above. For off-campus accommodation, the Council's policy stance in the current Local Plan is to restrict such accommodation except where an overriding need for such accommodation is demonstrated, demand for the conversion of existing dwellings to HMOs will be demonstrably reduced, and the accommodation will not negatively impact the amenity of surrounding areas, especially residential areas. Since the adoption of this policy in 2013, only limited, new-build off-campus student accommodation has been granted planning permission in Ormskirk.



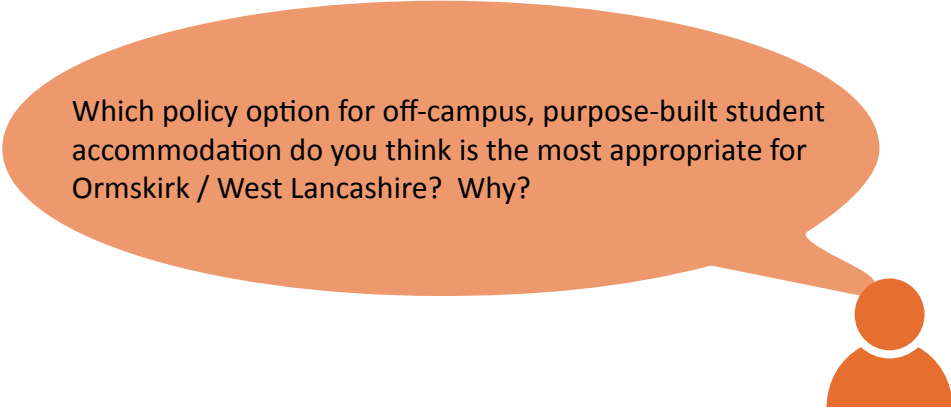
5.11 With regard to the provision of off-campus, purpose-built student accommodation, the policy options are as follows:

- 1) *Continue with the current policy approach of restricting off-campus purpose-built student accommodation unless strict criteria are met. There is no evidence to suggest this approach has been inappropriate over the past 3-4 years, although provision of purpose-built student accommodation off-campus (other than HMOs) has been minimal.*
- 2) *Relax the current policy to allow purpose-built student accommodation away from the University Campus. Such a change in policy would require strong justification, not least robust evidence of continuing unmet need for student accommodation. However, a more relaxed policy could in theory be beneficial if it were to reduce demand for HMOs, either to lessen the current (slow) spread of HMOs, or to result in some HMOs converting back to dwelling houses. Suitable criteria would be necessary to ensure off-campus student accommodation has no unacceptable impacts on the local community.*
- 3) *Allocate specific sites for off-campus student accommodation, whilst restricting 'unplanned' developments elsewhere. This would enable the Council to have an element of control over numbers and locations of bedspaces to be provided. Once again, such an approach should be on the basis of robust evidence that there remains an unmet accommodation need. Sites chosen should be such that there is no unacceptable impact on the local community.*

- 4) *Tighten the current policy to severely, or entirely, restrict off-campus, purpose-built student accommodation. The Council would need extremely strong evidence of harm to justify such an approach and would need to be sure that no new accommodation is required to accommodate student numbers. Such a policy is likely to lead to an increase in applications for HMOs and could potentially make the University less attractive to students if there is insufficient accommodation of good quality.*

Summary

Social Policy Issue 8 discusses the provision of off-campus purpose-built student accommodation in Ormskirk. If you have views on this issue, please answer the question in our **Issues and Options Survey**.



Which policy option for off-campus, purpose-built student accommodation do you think is the most appropriate for Ormskirk / West Lancashire? Why?

6. Minority Groups / People with a Disability

- 6.1 Planning policy matters are unlikely to have an impact on many diversity groups, including those of gender, religion and sexuality. However, some policy areas will have varying levels of impact on diversity groups and it will be important for policy to consider the requirements of those different groups. This may include:
- Age: To ensure that the young can access affordable homes, employment opportunities and play and leisure facilities; whilst the old have access to specialised / elderly accommodation, care, health and transport services.
 - Racial or ethnic groups: To respond to the requirements of gypsy and traveller groups who have particular accommodation needs. It is unlikely that other ethnic groups would be affected by planning policy.
- 6.2 Consideration should also be given to those with disabilities, including disability arising through age. This is particularly relevant to the design of new developments, to ensure that accessibility is promoted through both the physical environment and building design. As the population ages, there will need to be a greater focus on homes that can adapt to accommodate changing physical abilities and needs. It is anticipated that the numbers of people affected by dementia will increase with an ageing population and good design can help sufferers better identify their environment and serve to reduce their confusion. However, the provision of suitable accommodation for the elderly section above (Social Policy Issue 6) addresses this issue insofar as people of all ages who are disabled are similarly affected.



Social Policy Issue 9: Delivering suitable accommodation for travellers

- 6.3 There is, and has been for several years, a lack of authorised / suitable accommodation in the Borough for the travelling community. The 2014 Merseyside and West Lancashire GTAA identified a need for 22 permanent traveller pitches in West Lancashire by 2033, as well as a transit site and travelling showpeople yard. The current West Lancashire Local Plan (and its predecessors) did not allocate any specific sites to meet traveller accommodation needs, and work was suspended in June 2016 on the emerging Provision for Traveller Sites Development Plan Document, due to a shortage of deliverable sites being identified, mainly on account of landowners being unwilling for their land to be considered as a potential location for a traveller site. Consequently, all but one currently occupied gypsy pitches in West Lancashire are unauthorised, and a number of the pitches are in Flood Zone 3, where national policy does not allow residential caravans. The need remains to allocate specific deliverable sites to meet the accommodation needs of travellers (as defined in the government's Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, August 2015), and is therefore a matter for the Local Plan Review to address.
- 6.4 Provision of accommodation for travellers has proved a very difficult task, with the 'available' sites – i.e. the sites in the ownership of travellers, or of people willing to have the land as a traveller site – often in unsuitable locations, for example Flood Zone 3, and the 'suitable' sites not available for travellers to purchase. In preparing the Provision for Traveller Sites DPD, the Council undertook as extensive and rigorous a site search as was reasonably possible, carrying out two calls for sites, writing to owners of potential and allocated housing sites, contacting major landowners, looking at Council-owned land, and asking neighbouring local authorities under the Duty to Cooperate whether they would be willing to meet any of West Lancashire's traveller accommodation needs. The result was just one site considered to be available, suitable and viable, its capacity falling far short of the objectively assessed traveller accommodation needs for the Borough.
- 6.5 The National Planning Policy for Traveller Sites requires that specific deliverable sites be allocated to meet traveller accommodation needs in the short term – i.e. for the next five years, and that developable sites (or, failing that, broad locations) be identified to meet medium to long term needs. Needs must be objectively assessed, although the government's recent redefinition of 'travellers' may result in a change to needs figures. (As stated above, work will be commissioned to reassess traveller accommodation needs in West Lancashire.) Therefore, choosing whether or not to allocate sites, and choosing how many pitches to allocate are not policy options. The policy options – size, nature and distribution of sites – are discussed below.
- 6.6 It was recommended in good practice guidance¹³ (now withdrawn, but still considered relevant) that traveller sites contain between 5 and 15 pitches, although they can be larger. In theory, the whole Borough's traveller needs could be met on one large site, but in reality, this is not considered a viable option as travellers and their advocacy bodies all advise that co-locating different groups (and backgrounds) of travellers could lead to tension and unacceptable living conditions on the site. There are options, however, for a permanent site to be sited next to a transit site, owned by the occupants of the permanent site. It is also possible

13 Designing Gypsy and Traveller Sites – Good Practice Guide, DCLG, 2008.

to co-locate more than one group of travellers from the same ethnic background. At this stage, it is not possible to set out specific options for site numbers at present as up-to-date need figures are unknown.

6.7 The policy options with regard to provision of traveller sites are set out below. Once again, not all of the options are mutually exclusive.

1) *Allow the travellers based at present in West Lancashire to stay on their (currently unauthorised) sites. The existing travellers based in the Borough have been in situ for a number of years (in some cases, more than 20 years), and several have formed ties to their nearest community (for example through attendance at school). The Council has no evidence of the current travellers causing unacceptable harm to their nearby communities. It is usually cited as good practice to meet the needs of travellers where they arise; allowing them to stay in their present locations would achieve this. The main disadvantage with this policy option is the fact that three of the current sites are located on land that is classified as Flood Zone 3, on which national policy does not permit 'highly vulnerable development' (which includes static caravans), and thus this option could not meet all of West Lancashire's traveller accommodation needs. The extent of Flood Zone 3 land means that it will be unlikely that the needs of travellers currently based in Banks could be met where they arise.*

2) *When allocating new sites for other developments in the Borough set aside part of those sites for travellers. This approach has worked in a number of locations elsewhere. In searching for sites*


as part of the abortive work on the Provision for Traveller Sites DPD, the Council found it extremely difficult to find landowners who were willing for their land (or part of their land) to be considered as a traveller site. However, if the setting aside of part of the land was used as a 'bargaining tool' when negotiating the allocation of sites, this may result in greater success in finding willing landowners. Of course, any such sites would need to be suitably located, and there would need to be a guarantee that the travellers and other occupants of the site in question could live together without any issues.

3) *Compulsory Purchase of suitable sites in order to allocate them.*


If the Council enjoys no success in finding available sites, the remaining option is, as a very last resort, compulsory purchase of land by the Council in order to make them available to the travelling community and be able to allocate deliverable sites.

Summary


Social Policy Issue 9 discusses how sustainable accommodation for travellers can be delivered. What do you think about this? Answer the questions in our **Issues & Options Survey**.



Which policy option(s) for addressing the issues of meeting traveller accommodation needs do you think is (are) the most appropriate for West Lancashire? Why?



Are there any other social policy issues that should also be considered? If so, that are they?



7. What Happens Next?

Responding to the Issues & Options Consultation

7.1 Having read this Paper, the Council would like you to respond by commenting on what you've read through the Local Plan Review: Issues & Options consultation. The easiest way to do this is online at www.westlancs.gov.uk/localplan, where you will find instructions on how to respond.

7.2 The best way to respond is by completing a short survey online available at the above web link. The survey is related to the questions you'll have seen scattered throughout this Paper and the other Issues & Options consultation papers. You can also email or write in with your comments to:

Email: localplan@westlancs.gov.uk
Postal Address: **Local Plan Consultation**
Planning
West Lancashire Borough Council
52 Derby Street
Ormskirk
L39 2DF

7.3 All the Issues & Options consultation papers, as well as survey forms and details of how to engage with the consultation, are also available at:

- all Libraries in West Lancashire,
- at the Council Offices, 52 Derby Street, Ormskirk, L39 2DF; and
- at the Customer Service Point, Unit 142, first floor of the Concourse, Skelmersdale, WN8 6LN.

7.4 You can also phone the Council if you have any queries about the Local Plan Review Issues & Options Consultation to speak to a Council Officer on **01695 585194**.



Next Steps

- 7.5 With regard to the wider process for preparing a new Local Plan, following this Issues & Options Consultation, the Council will consider the feedback received from the public consultation and use it in preparing what is effectively a draft Local Plan, known as the Preferred Options Paper. The Preferred Options Paper narrows down on, and selects, the Council's preferred policy option for each topic (i.e. how policy will address each key issue) as well as the preferred strategic option for how much new housing and employment development should take place and where. At that point, site allocations are proposed to meet the development needs identified.
- 7.6 The Preferred Options Paper will be publicly consulted upon and the feedback from that consultation will be considered and the Council will make the necessary refinements and amendments to the proposed policies and site allocations to prepare what is essentially a "final draft" Local Plan, known as the Publication version, which represents the Local Plan that the Council want to take forward and adopt.
- 7.7 Once again, the Publication version will be made available for public scrutiny and formal representations (comments) on the document will be invited. However, this time, the comments will not be considered by the Council, but submitted with the Local Plan to a Planning Inspector to consider as part of the Examination of the Local Plan. This Examination will involve public hearings where those invited to speak by the Planning Inspector can put forward their views to help the Inspector to arrive at a decision on whether the Local Plan has been prepared in accordance with all relevant legislation and whether it is a "sound" document.
- 7.8 More detail will be provided by the Council on how to engage with the Preferred Options Paper, the Publication version and the Examination in Public as we reach each stage, but the above gives a brief overview of the process.
- 7.9 Alongside the preparation of the Preferred Options Paper, the Council will continue to prepare and commission new studies to provide the evidence needed to guide the Council's decision-making on which policy options, strategic option and site allocations are most appropriate for inclusion in the new Local Plan.

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