

West Lancashire Local Plan Review Issues & Options Consultation



Spatial Portrait Paper
February 2017



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1. Introduction

1.1 The current West Lancashire Local Plan 2012-2027 included a Spatial Portrait of the Borough which considered how, at the time of writing the Local Plan, the Borough was functioning in economic, social and environmental terms, looking at key indicators and data to identify issues that the Borough was facing and assessing the physical nature of the Borough, be that in terms of the natural environment, built environment or infrastructure provision.

1.2 As the Council begins preparation of a new Local Plan, this Spatial Portrait needs reviewing to see what has changed in recent years in the Borough and in how it functions, and what these changes mean for the key issues that the Borough faces and that the Local Plan can help address.

1.3 The Spatial Portrait in the current Local Plan split the Borough into six spatial areas, which were used to identify how development should be distributed across the Borough and so, as a start, this review of the Spatial Portrait will use those spatial areas to look at the Borough. Those six areas were:

- Skelmersdale with Up Holland
- Ormskirk with Aughton
- Burscough
- Northern Parishes
- Eastern Parishes

- Western Parishes



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. 38% 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). It contains a large number of services and facilities, a large stock of housing, employment opportunities, retail and leisure uses and is reasonably well-served by public transport (buses).
- 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 densely populated settlement in the Borough, but has not reached its originally planned size of 80,000 residents.



- 2.3 Skelmersdale has a young, 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 areas¹. Skelmersdale is the most deprived area in West Lancashire with 14 of its 23 Lower Super Output Areas (60%) featuring in the top 20% most deprived LSOAs nationally (compared with a figure of 29% for West Lancashire as a whole). 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 (10% unemployment rates in the town compared to 2% across the rest of the Borough). Skelmersdale has the highest proportion of people in the Borough with no qualifications and there is limited knowledge-based employment available. Skelmersdale has a significant proportion of its residents employed in the town, particularly in manual work in the manufacturing and industrial industries suggesting that the skills base in the town is low.
- 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 located to the south east of Skelmersdale, relatively distant and disconnected from residential populations and only providing a limited service between Kirkby

¹ The seven wards: a focus on Skelmersdale, S Collins, Lancashire County Council, March 2015

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 New Town consists of clear residential, industrial and retail zones. 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 land allocated for employment uses in the Borough. The town centre comprises the purpose-built but dated 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. Connections between these separate buildings are in need of improvement, and this is planned through a consented regeneration scheme comprising a new cinema, food and drink outlets and a mix of other retail uses. This would assist in enhancing the town centre's limited entertainment and night time economy and reduce the leakage of such spending from the Borough.

2.7 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 is such that the town is essentially congestion-free and 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.

2.8 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.

2.9 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 provision, primary provision is more than adequate and, while attainment levels at secondary level could be improved, there is sufficient secondary provision, even after the recent closure of the Glenburn High School.

- 2.10 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.



Key issues for Skelmersdale with Up Holland:

- Skelmersdale 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.
- Skelmersdale town centre would benefit from enhancement of its retail, leisure and evening economy offer to cement its role as the highest level centre in the Borough.
- Skelmersdale with Up Holland has excellent connections to the national road network and reasonable bus services to neighbouring towns. The area is well suited to take advantage of the logistics-based opportunities associated with the Liverpool 2 deep water terminal.
- Whilst Skelmersdale with Up Holland has reasonable bus services to nearby towns, Skelmersdale at present lacks a rail station.

3. Ormskirk with Aughton

- 3.1 Ormskirk is an attractive, relatively compact, historic market town situated centrally within West Lancashire. It is the second largest settlement in West Lancashire (population 18,000) and functions as the Borough's administrative centre. Ormskirk contains a full range of facilities and services – retail, a twice-weekly market (first granted a charter in 1286), leisure, sports, civic functions, primary and secondary schools, a university, hospital, rail and bus stations, and a small retail park, 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 parish church with its distinctive joint spire and tower. There is one local centre in the northern part of Ormskirk, on County Road, providing local retail and services. Parts of Ormskirk can suffer from flooding associated with the Hurlston Brook which runs across the town, although the actual designated Flood Zones 2 and 3 only cover a very small area.
- 3.2 Aughton (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. The pattern of development in Aughton tends to be less dense than in Ormskirk, and the average age of properties is generally less than in Ormskirk. Apart from two small local centres, Aughton tends to rely on Ormskirk for its facilities and services.

- 3.3 Ormskirk with Aughton has reasonably good transport links to surrounding areas, with a fifteen minute frequency electric rail service to Liverpool, and a less frequent diesel service to Preston. However, there are no direct east or west rail links (e.g. to Manchester or Southport). A number of bus routes converge at Ormskirk bus station, connecting to Liverpool, Southport, Preston and Wigan. 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). 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.



- 3.4 In recent times, parts of Ormskirk have experienced instances of flooding during periods of heavy rainfall on already saturated ground and the town is served by the New Lane WWTW which is currently close to capacity (see below in Burscough section) but generally, infrastructure provision (other than in relation to traffic congestion) is good in Ormskirk.
- 3.5 Recent development of Ormskirk with Aughton has generally been 'infill' in nature (for example on former industrial, hospital or school sites); however, Grove Farm, a greenfield site on the northern edge of Ormskirk, was allocated for development in the current Local Plan and its construction is expected to start in 2017.
- 3.6 Apart from small pockets of relative deprivation in Scott Ward, Ormskirk is generally of average affluence. Aughton is one of the most affluent areas of the Borough, with many large and expensive properties, and its affluence being borne out by national statistics on multiple deprivation, average earnings, car ownership, qualifications, etc.
- 3.7 Like other centres, Ormskirk town centre has suffered as a result of general retail trends (out-of-town and internet shopping) and the economic downturn from 2008 onwards, and continues to face these pressures. However, the town centre has fared better than average, and still has a low vacancy rate and a good number of independent, specialist shops. The night-time economy is developing, with bars and restaurants increasing in number, boosted by the patronage of the local student population.



- 3.8 Edge Hill University has seen significant expansion since 2000, 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 well over 400), 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. Conversely, the University provides a significant boost to the local economy, jobs- and trade-wise (1,580 full time equivalent jobs and Gross Value Added £75m per annum)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.



Key Issues for Ormskirk with Aughton:

- Ormskirk is a highly sustainable settlement, so in theory an appropriate location for more development (subject to infrastructure capacity). However, there is a lack of suitable developable 'infill' sites in the urban area. Undeveloped land surrounding Ormskirk with Aughton tends to be highly visible and open and / or subject to constraints.
- Ormskirk town centre is subject to various pressures; these need to be addressed and the town centre allowed 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.

4. Burscough

- 4.1 Burscough is the third largest settlement in West Lancashire (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 (13% of the Borough’s allocated employment land) for a town its size. The settlement and its attractive surrounding rural area is 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 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. Burscough was recently voted by a national newspaper as one of the top ten places in the country to raise a family.
- 4.2 Burscough town centre is reasonably vibrant and contains a range of shops including a large supermarket, a sports centre, other businesses, a thriving church, GP Practices and a library (although it has been identified for closure recently) and it is 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, has recently opened on the southern edge of the settlement; its impact on Burscough (and Ormskirk) town centre will become apparent over coming years. Education-wise, Burscough has a secondary school and several primary schools.

- 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 a less regular 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.

Key Issues for Burscough:

- Burscough has seen significant development over recent years / decades, and contains the current Local Plan's largest greenfield site allocation. It is important to ensure that that recent, and 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.
- The settlement is well served by rail, although the two lines would benefit from better integration and connecting bus services to other settlements.

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.



- 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 horticultural businesses to rectify this situation.
- 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. 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.

- 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 having been allocated for housing-led mixed-use redevelopment in the current Local Plan.
- 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.

Key issues for the Northern Parishes:

- Flooding – virtually the whole of Banks (indeed the North Meols Parish) is within Flood Zone 2 or 3 and so is severely restricted in terms of potential for new development, although the village is very well protected by the coastal flood defences.
- The combined impact of the horticultural business (including HGVs) and local residential traffic on Hesketh Lane / Station Road causes congestion at times in Tarleton.
- 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.

6. The Eastern 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 roughly split into a 'northern area' including a series of attractive and historic villages along the Leeds-Liverpool Canal and A5209 in the north of the area amongst the hills rising towards the east of the Borough, and a flatter, lowland 'southern area' between Skelmersdale and Ormskirk and southwards towards Kirkby. Both are intensively farmed and offer attractive views across open countryside. Together, the Eastern Parishes have a combined population of over 10,000, with the village of Parbold (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. During the preparation of the current Local Plan, residents expressed concerns about the closure of local facilities and services – an issue which is likely to be compounded by the recently announced closure of Parbold Library.

6.3 The 'southern area' of the Eastern Parishes contains no real settlements of any note, with just small hamlets and scattered collections of dwellings and farmsteads across the whole area. As such, there are very few services 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 (and planning permission was recently granted for a further 14 ha of employment land adjacent to it) but there is little connection between it 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 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 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 Parishes are comparatively affluent - all fall within the 40% least deprived neighbourhoods nationally. Parbold ward is amongst 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 Parishes wards are similar. Many of these residents commute out of the area for work. 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.

6.7 In terms of environmental concerns, the residents of the northern part of the Eastern Parishes 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 Parishes area, as well as various areas of ecological value, although none have a national designation.

Key Issues for the Eastern Parishes:

- Lack of services and access to public transport can lead to rural isolation.
- Localised flooding in the northern part of the area.
- Access to housing – particularly for older people and for affordable housing.

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 and the rural areas around 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 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. There is also a lack of affordable housing in the area to meet local needs.



- 7.3 The Grade 1 Listed Gothic Revival Scarisbrick Hall is a landmark building set within attractive, protected parkland (listed 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 path, with others 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 in particular means that, depending on the agricultural practices in any given field, the Western Parishes provide valuable feeding habitat to many thousands of migrant wild ducks, geese, waders and swans which over-winter at Martin Mere.
- 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 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.

7.6 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.

Key issues for the Western Parishes:

- Housing affordability.
- Rural isolation and access to services.
- Flood risk and peat deposits close to the boundary with Southport.

8. West Lancashire in General

Social & Demographic Matters

- 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 2015, give the Borough's population as 112,740.
- 8.2 The Borough's population is projected to rise to 116,200 by 2037 – a 3.8% increase on its 2014 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 increase predicted is to the age category 75+ with a growth of 76.5% on its 2014 rate.
- 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, at a ward level, results vary with residents from Skelmersdale wards rating their health less well than residents of Aughton, Hesketh-with-Beconsall and Parbold. Health statistics also indicate significant differences across West Lancashire, including in premature mortality rates in the least compared to the most deprived areas of the Borough; these differences may be attributed to lifestyle factors such as diet and smoking, as well as to the local environment. 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. 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 but 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 rent privately has increased by 69% whilst the proportion in social rented tenure has decreased by 8%. The increase in privately rented homes is largely due to the increase in house prices over the past decade. 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 2012 stood at £180,985. The median house price is now almost 7 times (6.96) the median earnings in West Lancashire and this is significantly higher than the county average (5.22) and above the national average (6.72).



8.13 Household projections indicate that by 2039, West Lancashire will have 50,000 households, an increase of 9% from its 2014 level. In keeping with the population trends, it is expected that the number of households headed by someone aged over 85 will increase by 194% between 2014 and 2039, and those households headed by someone aged 75-84 are expected to increase by 54% 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 that for the cheaper housing in the Ormskirk area, where the value of such housing is increased by the 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 provision for accommodation in caravans and houseboats, so the need, and market, for these accommodation types must be considered. In particular, the specific need for Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople in West Lancashire must be met.



8.16 The popularity of self- and custom-build housing has risen in profile in the UK in recent years with numerous 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 Indicators

- 8.17 There were 51,900 economic active people in West Lancashire in March 2016 representing an economic activity rate of 73.8%. This was lower than both the North West (75.5%) and Great Britain (77.8%). Economic inactivity in West Lancashire (26.2%) was therefore above the North West (24.5%) and Great Britain (22.2%), however, this is partly explained by the Borough's student population being somewhat above regional and national levels. Of those economically inactive in the Borough, 40.3% want to work which is significantly higher than both regionally and nationally. 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 March 2016 (4.5%) was lower than for the North West (5.3%) and Great Britain (5.1%) which has been a consistent trend with the exception of the period from mid-2009 to mid-2010 when it was higher. Unemployment in the Borough has steadily decreased since September 2012; nevertheless, significant geographical variations remain between the different settlements and wards of the Borough in terms of with the highest unemployment rates being seen in Skelmersdale.
- 8.19 Gross average weekly pay income for full-time employees in the Borough stood at £503.50 in 2015 which is above the North West average (£492.00) but below Great Britain (£529.60). This has been a consistent relative position over the past 14 years and represents an increase of 27.5% upon 2002 income levels.
- 8.20 The occupations of the Borough's residents are broadly similar to England and Wales. However, the 2011 Population Census indicated that there are proportionately less residents employed in the higher skilled occupations (managers, professionals, associate and technical) in West Lancashire (38.7%) than the national average and proportionately greater (20.5%) in the less skilled and unskilled occupations (plant and machine operatives and elementary), a difference of approximately 2% in both instances. The greatest amount of Borough residents work in professional occupations, followed by associate professionals and technical occupations whilst the least residents work in sales and customer services and as process, plant and machine operatives. In the rural areas of the Borough, agricultural and horticultural employers (including packaging industries) play an important role, although these often rely upon migrant and seasonal workers.
- 8.21 West Lancashire has experienced prolonged and steady growth in the total number of indigenous employees from less than 10,000 in 1929 to 45,500 in 2014. The Business Register Employment Survey (BRES) indicates that the largest number of employees in the Borough in 2014 were within the wholesale, retail and repairs (7,800), manufacturing (6,800), health (6,400), education (4,600 – partly due to the presence of Edge Hill University) and accommodation and food services (4,100) sectors. There was an increase of 3,300 jobs between 2009 and 2014 with greatest increases being in accommodation and food services, professional, science and technology and health. Whilst manufacturing employment remained static during this time, there was a decline of 2,800 employees in the earlier period 1998 to 2008 which is consistent

with national changes in this sector. Economic forecasts indicate that job growth will rise in the period 2012-37 with sectoral change continuing the above historic trends alongside additional forecast growth in construction and wholesale and retailing.

- 8.22 The Borough is home to a number of international and nationally recognised companies including Pilkington UK, Co-operative Bank, PepsiCo, Asda, Walkers Snack Foods and Trelleborg Offshore UK. 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 2015 the vast majority of the 4,240 active enterprises were 'micro' businesses (defined as 0-9 employees) at 86.6% followed by 'small' (10-49 employees) at 11.6%. Most traditional employment uses (B1, B2 and B8) are located in Skelmersdale, with Burscough and Simonswood also key locations.
- 8.23 A particular economic opportunity at the current time is the anticipated growth in the logistics sector and, to a lesser degree, advanced manufacturing and its supporting sectors as a result of the opening of the Liverpool2 deep water terminal at the Port of Liverpool. West Lancashire, and particularly Skelmersdale, is in very easy reach of the Port of Liverpool by road (along Dunning's Bridge Road in Sefton and then the M58) and so it is very likely that West Lancashire will fall within the area of search for businesses and developers looking to develop large-scale warehousing and other B2 / B8 uses. This important opportunity must be explored by the Council as it considers what type of provision of employment land should be made, and where, in the Local Plan Review.

- 8.24 West Lancashire has strong economic links with areas outside the Borough which is reflected by commuter flows. There is a total outflow of 22,000 commuters with Sefton (5,476) being the most popular destination, followed by Liverpool (3,042) and Wigan (2,483). Inward commuting flows were 2,200 less, amounting to approximately 19,800, comprising large numbers from Sefton (5,220) and Wigan (4,793). Skelmersdale remains a significant employment destination.
- 8.25 Ormskirk, Skelmersdale and to a lesser extent Burscough are the Borough's main shopping and commercial centres. The collective retail, commercial leisure and night time economy offer in West Lancashire remains relatively modest which means that there are significant outflows of expenditure to surrounding areas including Southport, Wigan and Liverpool. There is a substantial 74% leakage of Borough residents' total comparison goods (essentially non-food) expenditure whilst it is a much lower 32% for convenience goods (essentially food) expenditure reflecting the more localised nature of food shopping trips and presence of major foodstores in the Borough (Asda, Morrisons, Tesco and Booths).



Transport & Infrastructure

- 8.26 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.
- 8.27 Three rail lines run through the Borough, providing links to Liverpool, Preston, Southport, Wigan and Manchester, although interchanging between these lines within the Borough can be difficult. There are regular bus services between Southport and Wigan, which travel via Skelmersdale and Ormskirk. However, public transport services within the remainder of the Borough are generally poor, particularly in the rural areas.
- 8.28 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 recognise the importance of strong working relationships with infrastructure providers to share information throughout the plan preparation process and facilitate an iterative decision making process.
- 8.29 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. Additional development in the Northern Parishes may exacerbate this if appropriate improvements or management plans are not put in place. United Utilities also have plans to upgrade the Bickerstaffe Water Treatment Works 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 to meet proposed growth but localised up-sizing to the water supply infrastructure will be required to be delivered through developments. Climate change may create supply issues in the future.
- 8.30 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.
- 8.31 Within West Lancashire, transport planning is the responsibility of Lancashire County Council which sets out the vision and objectives for future transport in the Borough within The Lancashire Local Transport Plan (LTP3) 2011-2021 and the West Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan (2014). These documents set out plans to transform the transport network in the Borough, including opportunities to deliver a new rail station in Skelmersdale, a Route Management Plan for West Lancs (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, further solutions to connect

residents with service and employment areas need to be explored, especially in rural areas, given the reduction in bus services across the Borough.

- 8.32 The increasing ageing population will inevitably place greater demand on health services and any significant increase in population will require additional GP provision to be borne in mind as plan preparation progresses. The recent announcements regarding closure of community facilities including libraries and children centres is also a concern.
- 8.33 In relation to education provision, the Education Authority expect there to be sufficient numbers of primary places, and a surplus of secondary schools places, up to 2027, which means there are no immediate issues with education provision. The only highlighted exception is that of Burscough, which may warrant additional primary school places as a result of the existing planned growth in the area.
- 8.34 The Council have a desire to replace the existing leisure facilities in Skelmersdale and Ormskirk and to improve Burscough Sports Centre, and recognise the importance of outdoor sports and recreation facilities, including parks and green space. Green infrastructure, and biodiversity sites, need to be protected, whilst maximising the opportunities for sustainable access.

The Natural and Built Environment

- 8.35 The landscape of West Lancashire is characterised by the largely flat extensive mosslands and wetlands of the Coastal Plain. The flat and fertile plains provide ideal farmland and the Borough contains the largest proportion of best and most versatile agricultural land in the North West. Contrast is presented by the Up Holland ridge, Ashurst Beacon and Parbold Hill in the east of the Borough, offering views over the surrounding countryside, extending as far as North Wales.



- 8.36 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.

- 8.37 There are around 600 listed buildings and more than 160 locally listed buildings and structures across the Borough. Reflecting the area's agricultural heritage, over 120 of the statutorily listed buildings are farmhouses, with a substantial proportion of the remainder in some way related to agriculture (e.g. barns or agricultural worker's 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.
- 8.38 The Borough has the highest total area of wildlife trust reserves in the country, with Martin Mere and the Ribble Estuary being the larger two assets. These are recognised as internationally important wetland habitats, particularly important as a winter feeding ground for wetland birds.
- 8.39 Two key water ways 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.
- 8.40 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.

8.41 Climate policy at international and national level aims to cut global greenhouse gas emissions in order to avoid the most extreme impacts and provide more time to prepare and adapt to those that are unavoidable. As well as changes at national level, measures to cut carbon emissions should also be put into place at a local level and can include:

- Reducing the need to travel and providing for sustainable transport;
- Providing opportunities for renewable and low carbon energy technologies;
- Providing opportunities for decentralised energy and heating; and
- Promoting low carbon design approaches to reduce energy consumption in buildings, such as passive solar design.



9. Key Issues for West Lancashire

9.1 Having considered all of the above analysis of the Borough, in relation to both specific areas and the Borough as a whole, there are several key spatial issues which present themselves and that the Local Plan should seek to address where it can:

- Whilst the number of people in the Borough is increasing relatively slowly, the population is ageing, with older age cohorts projected to grow very significantly both number-wise and percentage-wise over coming years. Conversely, the working age population is projected to decrease. This change in the make-up of the population is likely to place increased demand on the provision (availability, accessibility and variety) of housing, services, health care, and appropriate training / jobs for the older population, whilst the number of persons able to contribute towards providing such services decreases proportionally. It is also likely to have implications for job growth requirements, commuting levels, and general housing provision.
- West Lancashire as a whole is very much ‘middle of the road’ nationally in terms of deprivation. However, there are some notable disparities and inequalities in health, life expectancy, educational attainment, and consequent job opportunities within the Borough. These disparities are most marked between Skelmersdale and more affluent areas such as Aughton, Parbold and Tarleton.
- The affordability of housing is an issue for West Lancashire (and elsewhere), the median house price being almost seven times the median earnings. The average age of household heads is projected to rise over time, both as a result of affordability issues, and the ageing of the population. The affordability issue is tied up with the contrasting housing market strengths that are seen in different parts of the Borough and offering viable alternatives to traditional housing built by large developers for the market, such as self- and custom-build, caravans and houseboats.
- The needs of the travelling community need to be met in an appropriate way and as close as possible to where demand arises, taking into account physical and environmental constraints.
- The issue of student accommodation in Ormskirk needs to be adequately addressed to ensure that sufficient provision is made to accommodate student demand but in a way which minimises harm to, or conflict with, other parts of the residential community of Ormskirk.
- Economically, West Lancashire continues to gradually grow, with steady growth in jobs in particular, and this growth is anticipated to continue and possibly at a higher rate. However, the local workforce will decline in number as the population ages (and as working age people struggle to afford a house in West Lancashire). As such, the continued economic growth of West Lancashire needs to be fuelled not just by providing land in the right location for new employment premises to attract businesses (both large and small, established and new), but by providing the right supporting context to attract those businesses which includes providing a skilled local workforce, appropriate housing provision to accommodate employees and an attractive

environment and offer to retain and draw working age people to the area, especially graduates.

- There is a significant opportunity to boost the local economy, especially in the M58 corridor, as a result of the Liverpool2 deep water terminal and expected surge in demand for logistics facilities and 'spin-off' industries. Skelmersdale is likely to be the most appropriate location for such opportunities given its excellent road access from the Port of Liverpool.
- There is pressure in some parts of the Borough for housing on existing employment sites, leading to loss of employment land.
- There is significant leakage of expenditure from the Borough, especially in relation to comparison (non-food) retail and commercial leisure / entertainment and the night-time economy. The Borough's town centres in particular need to be managed and developed appropriately to help them reinvent themselves to meet 21st Century preferences for retailing, leisure and entertainment.

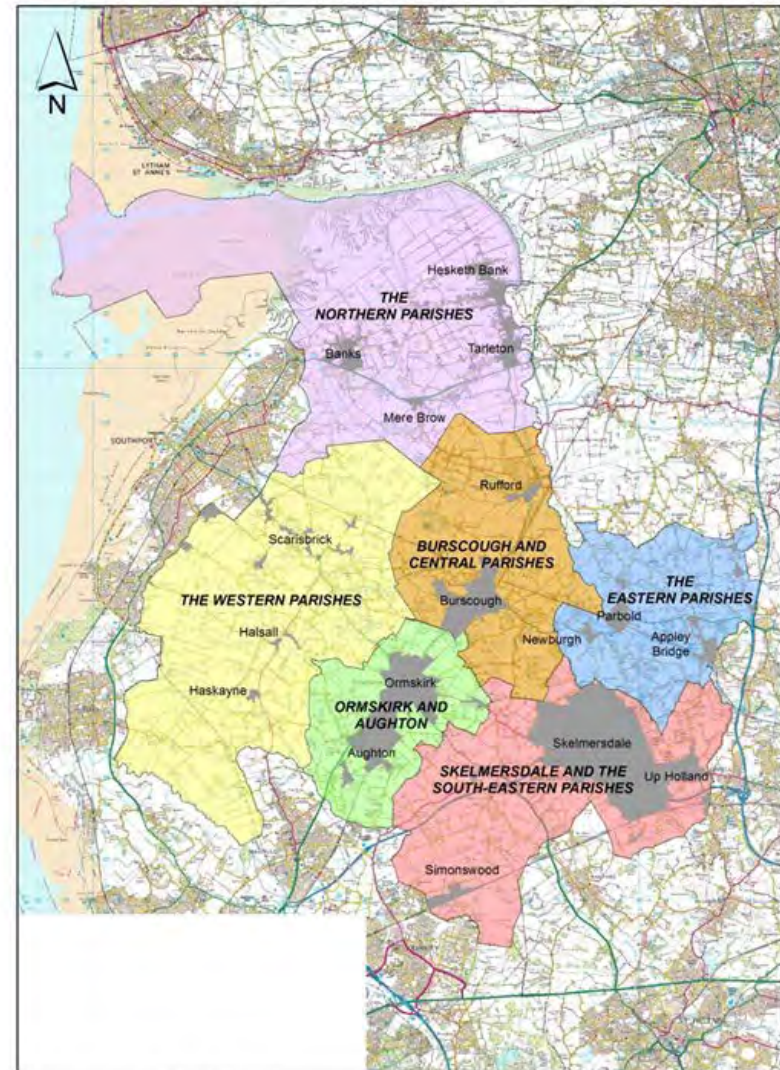


- The amount of best and most versatile agricultural land in the Borough is a regionally important resource and is vital to the high performing agricultural industry in West Lancashire.
- Parts of West Lancashire are internationally important designated nature reserves, accommodating significant proportions of the world population of certain species. These are both an asset to the Borough, requiring continued protection, and also a potential constraint to development in some areas.
- The impacts of climate change, particularly in relation to flooding and drainage, must be managed appropriately by how and where new development is built in West Lancashire to ensure that new development does not make existing issues worse.
- There are varying levels of accessibility to services / facilities / jobs / public transport around the Borough. General accessibility, in terms of distance to key services, has decreased over recent years. Consistent with many other areas, car use is high and cycling and public transport use are lower than they could be. As such the issue of rural isolation in particular is a concern.
- Public transport and highways traffic management needs improving in key areas, such as a rail link into Skelmersdale, easing traffic congestion in Ormskirk and generally facilitating better access via a range of transport modes across the Borough.

A New Definition of Spatial Areas

- 9.2 Having reviewed the Spatial Portrait above, aside from updating the key issues that West Lancashire in general and specific areas face, it has raised questions over whether the Spatial Areas used in the current Local Plan are still the best way to sub-divide the Borough from a functional point of view.
- 9.3 The current Spatial Areas hark back to the original set of Local Plans for the Borough when there were three Local Plans covering much of the District (the Western Parishes of Scarisbrick, Halsall, Downholland and Great Altcar were not covered by a Local Plan until the first District-wide Local Plan in 1999):
- The Ormskirk, Burscough and Aughton Local Plan (May 1987)
 - The Skelmersdale and Eastern Parishes Local Plan (January 1992)
 - The Northern Parishes Local Plan (July 1992)
- 9.4 The main difference between this sub-division of the Borough and the current Spatial Areas is that the latter sought to separate out the three main urban areas and Key Service Centres of Skelmersdale (with Up Holland), Ormskirk (with Aughton) and Burscough.
- 9.5 Looking afresh at the Borough, while there is never a sub-division along administrative boundaries that is ever ideal, the current Spatial Areas perhaps do not fully reflect the way the Borough functions on the ground, so to speak. The main urban areas are not linked with their natural rural hinterlands, some parishes are grouped with others where the functional relationship is not really as strong (or perhaps is less strong than their relationship with other parishes), some spatial areas cover very diverse areas that might be better being sub-divided.
- 9.6 As such, on reflection, it is proposed that in preparing the new Local Plan, a different set of Spatial Areas should be used, as follows:
- Skelmersdale and the South-Eastern Parishes (incorporates all of the unparished area of Skelmersdale, together with the Parishes of Bickerstaffe, Lathom South, Simonswood and Up Holland)
 - Ormskirk with Aughton (includes the three wards in the unparished area of Ormskirk and the Parish of Aughton)
 - Burscough and the Central Parishes (encompasses the Parishes of Burscough, Lathom and Rufford)
 - The Northern Parishes (includes the Parishes of Hesketh-with-Becconsall, North Meols and Tarleton)
 - The Western Parishes (encompasses the Parishes of Downholland, Great Altcar, Halsall and Scarisbrick)
 - The Eastern Parishes (incorporates the Parishes of Bispham, Dalton, Hilldale, Newburgh, Parbold and Wrightington)
- 9.7 This sub-division places Rufford and Lathom more appropriately with Burscough, as the functional relationships are stronger with Burscough than with the Northern Parishes and the Eastern Parishes respectively; it ensures that the urban area of Ormskirk and Aughton are surrounded by their natural rural hinterlands (the non-built-up

areas of the unparished area of Ormskirk and the parish of Aughton); and it splits the northern Eastern Parishes off from Skelmersdale and the southern Eastern Parishes, given the quite distinct differences in nature of what is now termed 'the South-Eastern Parishes' in comparison to the remainder of the Eastern Parishes.



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4. What Happens Next?

Responding to the Issues & Options Consultation

4.1 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.

4.2 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**

4.3 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.**

4.4 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

- 4.5 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.
- 4.6 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.
- 4.7 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.
- 4.8 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.
- 4.9 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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