

Wyre Borough Council
Overview and Scrutiny Committee
6th June 2016

Wyre Local Plan Preparation Update

1. Update on current Progress on the Local Plan

i. Housing requirement and distribution.

It was reported in February that the sensitivity testing of the Employment Land Study (ELS) Update was complete and has shown that the Experian forecasts used in The ELS Update are appropriate.

The results of the sensitivity testing for the ELS Update has fed into the update of Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). This work is now complete and the unconstrained housing Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) figure of 479 dwellings per annum was reported to full Council in April through the Portfolio Holder's Executive Update.

It was reported previously that in establishing a housing requirement figure for the Local Plan, evidence relating to flood risk & highways will be taken into account. It was also reported that both these pieces of critical evidence have been delayed and they are due to be completed in May. See below under 'Evidence base'.

ii. Infrastructure planning and viability work

There have now been meetings with all infrastructure providers who have been made aware of potential growth in the Borough. Meetings are on-going with Lancashire County Highways, Highways England and Network Rail with regards to highways and transport evidence for the Local Plan, (see Evidence Base below).

As previously reported further meetings with all infrastructure providers will be necessary once the scale and distribution of development has been determined. It is evident from the initial meetings that it may not be necessary to meet with all Infrastructure Providers unless there are issues arising from the level of growth in a particular area. It is expected that meetings will be required with LCC Education Authority and the CCGs.

Work is progressing on updating the viability evidence. This will feed into the Local Plan Viability Assessment.

iii. Evidence base

- The Employment Land Review (ELR) update and sensitivity testing are now complete.

- The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and Addendums I and II are complete.
- As previously reported, consultants were appointed in February to complete the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) Level II. An initial table indicating flood risk on the various sites has been produced and the results are feeding into the LP process. The SFRA is due to be completed early June. The Environment Agency, LCC and United Utilities will need to comment/endorse the findings before it can be finalised.
- Progress is being made in relation to highways evidence. In March it was agreed that further modelling work was necessary to assess the cumulative implications on Junction 3 on the M55 from growth in Wyre and Fylde. A meeting took place on 19 May when both LCC and Highways England reported the final findings. This provides more certainty on the final position with regards to highway constraints on growth and subject to identifying specific improvements required to the highway network and their deliverability, enables us to determine the scale and distribution of development.
- It was reported in February that the Green Belt Review was complete. This was an error. The Study was completed and published on the Council's website in May.
- The Rural Affordable Housing Needs Study is now complete.
- It was reported in February that consultants have been commissioned jointly with Blackpool and Fylde Council to update the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) in light of new Government Policy and in particular the new definitions of a 'Gypsy' and 'Traveling Showperson' published in 2015. There have been delays due to difficulties in contacting travellers at the site at Hardhorn. The study has been completed and we are currently reviewing the draft report.
- Following the Ministerial Statement published in June 2015 we are now required to identify areas suitable for wind energy developments in the Local Plan. In February it was reported that we are reviewing existing evidence to establish what if anything further is needed. It was concluded that no further evidence is required in order to comply with the requirements of the ministerial statement.
- Work has progressed on the Local Centre Study update. The boundaries of all town, district and local centres have been reviewed.
- Following a meeting with Heritage England, we are now advised that we will have to carry out heritage assessments for allocations in the Local Plan. This is an additional task not previously programmed. It will need to be undertaken once allocations have been identified. Ecological and landscape assessments will also be necessary in relation to specific allocations.

iv. Development Management policies.

Work is progressing in drafting the Development Management Policies. Draft policies were circulated internally at the end of February for comment. Currently meetings are being held with Development Management and the Head of Planning Services to finalise the wording.

v. Duty to Co-operate meetings

As previously reported, meetings have now been held with all adjoining local authorities to establish strategic cross boundary issues. The possibility of Wyre not being able to meet in full its Objectively Assessed Needs for housing because of constraints has been raised with all adjoining authorities. A formal

letter has been sent to the Chief Executives of Fylde and Blackpool Councils regarding the housing situation and reminding them that all three authorities have a collective responsibility with regards to the OAN needs on the Fylde Coast.

A letter has also been sent to the Chief Executives of Preston and Lancaster City Councils.

vi. Sustainability Appraisal

The next stage in the process would be to assess various housing scenarios as well as the draft policies and proposals in the draft Local Plan.

2. Issues affecting progress

- As previously reported establishing the Local Plan housing requirement has been affected by delays in progressing the highways and flood-risk evidence.

Completing the highways evidence is critical. Any further delay would be a concern and it would be difficult to ensure submission before the 31 March 2017. Once the highways constraints are known draft allocations can be determined. The intention is to have a draft plan ready by early June so that various assessments can be carried out including the Sustainability Appraisal, Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitat Regulations Assessment. These can take six to eight weeks.

- Attempts to meet with Natural England for over a year have not been successful. A meeting did, however, take place on 18 May. NE's requirements in relation to Pink Footed Geese are a concern and could delay the process. At present we only have third hand information from colleagues in other LAs as to what NE's requirements are.
- As previously reported the Housing and Planning Bill is going through parliament and will introduce further planning reforms. These might have direct implications for the local plan and/or divert resources. Two main matters that will require consideration are 'Self Build' and 'Brownfield land registers'. In addition, there might be further work required to establish the general need for 'caravans and park homes' and also 'starter homes' as part of the affordable housing requirement.
- As previously reported progressing the Local Plan requires engagement with various organisations including the County Council, adjoining local authorities and many infrastructure providers. These are time consuming tasks and we depend on a timely response from the various organisations. For example, to prepare the Infrastructure Plan we will require input from all the infrastructure providers. Work with infrastructure providers can not progress to conclusion until we have established the scale and distribution of development across the Borough.
- There have been two enquiries regarding the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan at Barton and Dolphinholme. Both of these settlements extend across the borough boundary and both have been instigated by the parishes in Preston and Lancaster respectively. Neither has progressed to actual submission yet, however once there is a submission to the Council to designate a Neighbourhood Plan area, the Council will have to comply with regulations and this will divert resources away from the Local Plan.

3. Critical work in the next three months

- Completing the highway evidence work and determining the Local Plan housing requirement and the distribution of housing.
- Completing work in relation to the Development Management Policies and Settlement boundaries.
- Prepare a draft Local Plan and begin the Sustainability Assessment incorporating a Strategic Environmental Assessment, (SA/SEA); Habitat Regulations Assessment, (HRA); Viability Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, (HIA) and Equality Impact Assessment, (EIA).
- Commence work to finalise the Infrastructure Delivery Plan
- Progress compliance with the duty to co-operate with regarding to OAN requirement in Wyre.
- Progress other Evidence work including background papers

4. Overall Programme

The Government has indicated its intention to intervene in LAs who have not progressed their Local Plan to a certain stage by the 31 March 2017. Following a meeting with DCLG it is clear that we need to expedite the preparation of the Local Plan. A report will be taken to Full Council in July to amend the Local Development Scheme (i.e. Local Plan project plan). The timetable will be considered by Full Council in July.

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