

**Wyre Borough Council****Overview and Scrutiny Committee****12<sup>th</sup> September 2016****Wyre Local Plan Preparation Update****1. Update on current Progress on the Local Plan****i. Housing Requirement and distribution.**

It was reported in June that 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 Report. This equates to 9,580 dwellings over the plan period (2011-2031).

As reported previously, the next stage is to establish the housing requirement in the Local Plan e.g. what scale of housing can be delivered taking into account physical, environmental and policy constraints. The main constraining factors are highways capacity and flood risk. There has been a delay in the completion of this evidence as reported below under Evidence Base. Therefore it is still not possible to finalise in detail the overall scale and distribution of housing development in the Local Plan. However It is guesstimated that the Local Plan can only make provision for about two thirds of the 9,580 dwellings.

**ii. Draft Local Plan**

Although the evidence is not complete, a draft Local Plan has been prepared in order to progress work on Sustainability and Habitat Regulation Assessments and Local Plan Viability Assessment. The draft Local Plan shows the maximum scale of residential development that could be accommodated based on draft highways evidence and with the caveat that local highway issues at Poulton and Little Thornton can be overcome. The draft Local Plan is also used as the basis for further engagement with Infrastructure Providers and stakeholders such as Parish and Town Councils. Meetings with representatives from Parish and Town Councils are arranged in September. All Council Members were briefed in August on the emerging Local Plan.

The draft Local Plan comprises –

1. Vision and Objectives
2. Development Management Policies
3. Site Allocations and Designations as shown on the draft Policies Map.

**Vision and Objectives**

Draft Vision and Objectives were set out in the Issues and options document which was subject to public consultation in summer 2015. The draft Vision and Objectives have been revised taking into account comments received.

**Development Management Policies**

The draft Development Management Policies have been finalised and circulated to ward Members during the briefings in August.

## Site Allocations and Designations as shown on the draft Policies Map

Although critical evidence on highways is not complete, a draft Proposals Map showing draft allocations for housing, employment and mix uses has been produced based on draft highway evidence and with the proviso that highway issues at Poulton and Little Thornton can be resolved. It shows the maximum number and distribution of dwellings that could be accommodated subject to highways constraints being resolved, which is around 7,300 dwellings over the plan period 2011-2031; the figure includes dwellings completed since 2011 and dwellings with planning permission as at 31 March 2016.

### **iii. Infrastructure Planning and viability work**

As previously reported further meetings with infrastructure providers are necessary where there are issues arising from the level of growth in a particular area.

The draft Local Plan is used as the basis for such further meetings where necessary. A meeting with LCC as the Local Education Authority (LEA) was held early in August to determine where it is necessary to provide additional school places to support planned growth. Similar meetings are being organised with the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) in Wyre.

There are on-going meetings with Lancashire County Highways, Highways England and Network Rail with regards to highways and transport evidence for the Local Plan, (see Evidence Base below) including necessary highway and transport infrastructure to support growth.

The draft Local Plan has been forwarded to the Council's viability consultants in order to complete the Local Plan Viability Assessment.

### **iv. Evidence Base**

1. As previously reported the following pieces of evidence are now complete:
  - Employment Land Review (ELR) update including sensitivity testing;
  - Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and Addendums I and II;
  - Green Belt Study;
  - Rural Affordable Housing Needs Study.

As previously reported no further evidence is needed with regards to wind energy.

2. There had been a delay in completing the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) Level II. The draft report has been received and has been sent to the Environment Agency, LCC as Lead Flood Authority and United Utilities for their comment. The final SFRA level II is expected to be completed in September following endorsement from the Environment Agency, LCC and United Utilities

Draft findings from the SFRA level II were used in preparing the draft Local Plan.

3. Although some progress has been made in relation to local highways evidence, LCC has not kept to the May deadline. Following a meeting with LCC Chief Executive, it was agreed that the evidence will be completed by the 31<sup>st</sup> of August 2016.

At the final meeting to sign off the highways evidence scheduled for the 19<sup>th</sup> May LCC advised that further more detailed work was necessary with regards to the local highway network in Poulton-le-Fylde. This work has now been agreed with LCC and their consultants and will be completed the first week in November.

Highways England provided the Council with their evidence regarding the A585 including a spreadsheet tool to assist in assessing future capacity on the A585. HE however advised in July that the spreadsheet does not include any assumptions with regards to the Little Singleton bypass scheme. HE is not able to provide any advice on what level of growth can be supported until the new scheme is designed in January 2017. The capacity of the new scheme to support growth is critical material evidence for the Local Plan. A meeting is organised early in October to discuss the evidence for the A585 and how improvements could be financed.

Highway capacity is a significant constraint in delivering development in Wyre and until the evidence is complete it is not possible to confirm the scale and distribution of housing development in the Local Plan.

4. 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. Although it was anticipated that the Study would be completed in May, the draft report was inadequate. Work is on-going with consultants to ensure that a number of amendments to the report are made and that the report provides robust evidence.
5. Work has progressed on the Local Centre Study update. The boundaries of all town, district and local centres have been reviewed and have been taken into account in preparing the draft Local Plan.
6. The Settlement Study has also been completed and is available on the Council's website. Work on defining settlement boundaries is also complete.
7. As previously reported once allocations are confirmed it will be necessary to carry out heritage and ecology assessments. These will be undertaken in September/October once the final Highways Evidence (not including the Poulton-le-Fylde assessment) is received from LCC.
8. The draft Local Plan will be used as the basis for a Health Impact Assessment in September.

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 all adjoining Local Authorities except Ribble Valley requesting assistance in meeting Wyre housing need. The matter was also discussed in the Fylde Coast Joint Officers and Members MoU meeting in June. No Local Authority has indicated that they are able to assist. This is a matter that requires further collaboration and in particular with Fylde and Blackpool who share responsibility for housing needs within the joint Housing Market Area.

vi. **Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment (SA/SEA) & Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA)**

As reported above the draft Local Plan is used to progress this work which could take six to eight weeks. Although small revisions may be necessary once the highways position is known, it was considered best to start the process sooner than later.

## **2. Issues affecting progress**

- a) As previously reported establishing the Local Plan housing requirement has been affected by delays in progressing the highways and flood-risk evidence. Further delays in completing the highways evidence means the housing requirement cannot be confirmed, and other work cannot be finalised.

Although as indicated above other assessment work is being progressed in parallel once the final highway position is known it may be necessary to carry out quick updates of the various Local Plan assessments. As noted above the detail design of the Highways England scheme for Little Singleton will not be known until January 2017 which means that may not be possible to submit by the end of March 2031.

- b) As reported previously there have been difficulties in engaging with Natural England. However following a meeting last May, there is now co-operation with NE and the HRA work is progressing.
- c) The 2016 Housing and Planning Act covers further planning reforms. As yet there has not been any major impact on the Local Plan process. As measures are introduced through regulations there might be implications for the work of the team in terms of diverting resources. Potential areas of work relate to 'Self Build' and 'Brownfield land registers'. In addition, there might be further work required to establish the general need for 'starter homes' as part of the affordable housing requirement. Following legal advice no further work is required with regards to for 'caravans and park homes'.
- d) As previously reported progressing the Local Plan requires engagement with various organisations including the County Council, adjoining authorities and infrastructure providers. These are time consuming tasks and depend on a timely response from the various organisations. For example, input from infrastructure providers is necessary in order to finalise the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP). The draft Local Plan is used as the basis of further work with Infrastructure providers.
- e) As previously reported there have been two enquiries regarding the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan at Barton and Dolphinholme. An application for a Neighbourhood Plan Area designation at Dolphinholme is expected in September. This is the start of the process and the Council must comply with procedural requirements. As previously indicated potentially this could divert resources from the Local Plan. There has not been any further communication with regards to a Neighbourhood Plan for Barton.

## **3. Critical Work in the next three months**

- Completing the highway evidence work and confirming the Local Plan housing requirement and the distribution of housing.
- Completing in draft form the Sustainability Assessment / Strategic Environmental Assessment, (SA/SEA); Habitat Regulations Assessment, (HRA); Viability Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, (HIA) and Equality Impact Assessment, (EIA).
- Progress work towards finalising 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**

As previously reported the Government has indicated its intention to intervene in LAs who have not progressed their Local Plan to a certain stage by the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017. Following a meeting with DCLG, the Local Development Scheme (i.e. Local Plan project plan) was revised by Full Council in July in order to expedite the preparation of the Local Plan. In view of the

delays in completing highway evidence which is critical in the preparation of the Local Plan it may be necessary to revise the timetable. A letter will be sent from the Chief Executive to DCLG to explain the situation with regards to highway capacity in Wyre and that there are matters such as obtaining necessary evidence which is outside the Council's control and which are frustrating and delaying the Local Plan process.

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