

Wyre Borough Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

7th November 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 i.e. what scale of housing can be delivered over the plan period taking into account physical, environmental and policy constraints. The main constraining factors are highways capacity and flood risk. As reported in September there is a need for additional highways evidence which will delay finalising in detail the overall scale and distribution of housing development in the Local Plan until next year. However as explained below in the 'Evidence' section there are significant delays by LCC on timescales previously agreed for completing highway evidence work.

The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level II and its Addendum (incorporating an assessment of potential development sites) is scheduled to be completed in October.

It was reported in September that as a 'guesstimate' the Local Plan will at best only make provision for about 7,300 of the 9,580 dwellings needed.

ii. Draft Local Plan

As reported in September, 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. Progress on these studies is covered in the 'Infrastructure and Viability Work' and 'Evidence Base' sections.

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 with mitigation.

The draft Local Plan is also used as the basis for further engagement with Infrastructure Providers and stakeholders such as Parish and Town Councils. Confidential briefings on the emerging Local Plan were held with all Council Members in August and representatives from all Parish and Town Councils in September/October. Briefings with two of the three local MPs are scheduled in October. Paul Maynard MP was not available until mid-December.

As reported in the September Report the draft Local Plan comprises –

1. Draft Vision and Objectives which have been revised taking into account comments

received during the public consultation on the 'Issues and Options' document in summer 2015.

2. Draft Development Management Policies which have been finalised and circulated to ward Members and PC/TC representatives during the briefings in August - October.
3. Draft Site Allocations and Designations as shown on the draft Policies Map. The 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. Meetings with North Lancs CCG and Wyre and Fylde CCG were held in September and further meetings are scheduled in October. A meeting is also being organised with Great Eccleston Surgery.

There are on-going discussions 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 progress the Local Plan Viability Assessment. In order to complete the work it is necessary to have mitigation requirements for highways and flood risk. Flood risk mitigation requirements are being finalised with the Council's engineers but there are on-going issues with LCC with regards to advising on broad highway mitigation to support growth. There is a risk that the generic viability work may need to be updated before the evidence can be completed.

iv. Evidence Base

1. As previously reported the following pieces of evidence are now complete and published on the Council's website:
 - 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.

Since the last report the following evidence has been published on the Council's website:

- Green Infrastructure Study
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 1
- Settlement Study

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

2. The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) Level II and its Addendum is scheduled to be completed in October. Comments from the Environment Agency, LCC as Lead Flood Authority and United Utilities, (UU) have been incorporated into the final report. The delay in the completion of the study (previously scheduled for September) is due to delay in receiving comments from LCC and UU. The final SFRA level II is now endorsed by the Environment Agency, LCC Flood Authority and UU. The EA needs to endorse the Addendum.

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

3. There are continuing delays in completing the general highways evidence by LCC. As reported in September, following a meeting with LCC Chief Executive, Highway Officers and officers from Wyre (Chief Executive, Head of Planning Services and Planning Policy & Economic Development Manager) it was agreed that the evidence would be completed by the 31st of August 2016. A further draft report was received from LCC at the end of August which did not, however, address the comments previously made nor did it cover the matters discussed at a day-long meeting in July the purpose of which was to discuss the May report. Further comments and queries were submitted to LCC mid-September. LCC have indicated that the completed Highways Report (excluding Poulton-le-Fylde) will be submitted to Wyre end of October.

As previously reported at the meeting in May further more detailed work was necessary with regards to the local highway network in Poulton-le-Fylde. This work and the timetable were agreed with the LCC Chief Executive in August. The work was commissioned by LCC and scheduled to be completed the first week in November. The consultants undertaking this work have now indicated in a recent email that there will be a five week delay to the programme. Our Chief Executive has challenged both the Highway Consultants (Jacobs) and County Officers who have indicated that the delay is due to being unable to obtain reliable traffic counts because of planned works on the highway affecting necessary locations on the network. LCC has indicated that they will endeavour to minimise the delay and reduce timescales back towards the original completion date.

As previously reported, Highways England provided the Council with their evidence regarding the A585 including a spreadsheet tool to assist in assessing future capacity on the A585 but in July advised that the spreadsheet does not include any assumptions with regards to the Little Singleton bypass scheme. Consequently 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. In a meeting in October, the HE agreed to provide the Council with an additional evidence Report in January with regards to the impact of the Little Singleton bypass scheme on the capacity of the A585 to support growth in Wyre. At the meeting in October the delivery of improvements to the A585 was also discussed.

Highway capacity is a significant constraint to the delivery of 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 Councils 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 'Travelling 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. The consultants are being chased up to complete the work. It is unlikely, however,

that any final amendments to the report will result in any change to the identified needs.

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 draft Local Plan is being used as the basis for heritage and ecology assessments of draft allocations.
7. Although it was previously reported that the draft Local Plan will be used as the basis for a Health Impact Assessment, (HIA) in September, LCC were not able to do that. LCC has advised that they can organise workshops in October/November. However as the HIA is not a requirement for the Local Plan to be found sound and as the Sustainability Appraisal covers health issues it has been decided not to proceed with HIA and potentially delay the process. At this stage it is necessary to concentrate on completing the required evidence.

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 from our Chief Executive has been sent to the Chief Executives of all adjoining Local Authorities (except Ribble Valley) requesting assistance in meeting housing need in Wyre. 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 once the highways evidence can be shared with adjoining authorities.

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. The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) on the emerging local plan is expected in October. Small revisions may be necessary once the final highways position is known and the scale and distribution of housing is confirmed.

Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening on the emerging Local Plan was carried out in September and Natural England (NE) have agreed with the conclusions for an Appropriate Assessment (AA) in relation to draft allocations. This has now commenced and will need to be agreed with NE. NE has not commented on all aspects of the Screening. Clarification is awaited whether they have any further comments.

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 relatively 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 it is unlikely that we will be able to submit by the end of March 2031.

On-going delays in LCC completing the generic highways evidence and in particular covering mitigation measures has implications for the viability and infrastructure planning work.

- b) As previously reported, 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.
- c) As previously reported progressing the Local Plan requires engagement with various organisations including the County Council, adjoining local 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 finalised the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP). The draft Local Plan is used as the basis of further work with Infrastructure providers.
- d) 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 has now been received.

There has not formally been any further communication with regards to a Neighbourhood Plan for Barton. Officers are however aware that Barton PC is still working towards progressing a Neighbourhood Plan.

The Council will have to comply with Neighbourhood Planning regulations as necessary and as previously indicated potentially this could divert resources from the Local Plan. At present neighbourhood planning work is not having a significant impact on Local Plan work.

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 remains the top priority.
- Completing in draft form the Sustainability Assessment / Strategic Environmental Assessment, (SA/SEA); Habitat Regulations Assessment, (HRA); Viability Assessment, 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.
- Complete 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 31st 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.

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