

Wyre Borough Council**Overview and Scrutiny Committee**6th February 2017**Wyre Local Plan Preparation Update****1. Update on current Progress on the Local Plan****i. Housing Requirement and distribution.**

It was reported last 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. Although flood risk has now been established, highways capacity remains outstanding and is delaying the preparation of the Local Plan.

There are continuing delays in LCC completing the general evidence on highway capacity and consultants completing the evidence with regards to Poulton-le-Fylde. Although much progress was achieved in November/December last year a meeting arranged for the 9 January had to be rescheduled for the 26 January. The consultants submitted a draft report in relation to Poulton-le-Fylde before Christmas, however there were serious concerns with the quality of the report and comments were sent to LCC accordingly. At the time of writing this report it is not known whether the evidence will be completed by the end of January. More detail is given below in the 'Evidence' section. As reported previously, until the highways evidence is complete it is not possible to establish the scale and distribution of housing or to progress other certain areas of work which depend upon it.

The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level II and its Addendum (incorporating an assessment of potential development sites) was scheduled to be completed in October. The main Report was completed at the end of October and work is progressing with Council Engineers to finalise the Addendum.

It was reported previously that as a 'guesstimate' the Local Plan will at best only make provision for about 7,300 of the 9,580 dwellings needed. Based on the latest emerging highways evidence it is likely that the scale of housing that can be delivered in Wyre is likely to be less than 7,300.

ii. Draft Local Plan

As reported in September, although the evidence is not complete, a draft Local Plan was 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.

As the latest highways evidence has changed substantially, the draft Local Plan will need major revisions in particular with regards to the growth on the A6 corridor, over

Wyre, Thornton and Poulton-le-Fylde.

As reported previously the draft Local Plan prepared last summer was used as the basis for further engagement with Infrastructure Providers and stakeholders such as ward Members, Parish and Town Councils and two of the three MPs¹ between August and October. Substantial changes to the draft Plan arising from substantial changes to highway evidence will require further engagement with Council Members, Parish and Town Council, MPs and infrastructure providers.

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 will need to be revised based on the final highways evidence. Consequently the maximum number and distribution of dwellings that could be accommodated subject to highways constraints being resolved showed in the draft Plan of around 7,300 dwellings over the plan period 2011-2031 may change.

iii. Infrastructure Planning and viability work

The draft Local Plan prepared last summer was used as the basis for engaging with Infrastructure providers. As previously reported further meetings with infrastructure providers are necessary where there are issues arising from the level of growth in a particular area. These meetings cannot take place until the final scale and distribution of development is established. This can be a lengthy exercise and depends on how quickly we can meet with service providers and in particular the Local Education Authority and CCGs and how quickly they can respond to the final scale and distribution of growth. These meetings are necessary in order to finalise the Infrastructure Plan which is required to accompany the Local Plan.

The draft Local Plan had 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 confirm the allocations and any mitigation requirements for highways and flood risk. Flood risk mitigation requirements have now been determined with the Council's engineers but as reported above, the highways evidence is not yet complete. 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.
 - Green Infrastructure Study

¹ It should be noted that it has not been possible to meet with Paul Maynard MP.

- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 1
- Settlement Study
- Settlement Profiles

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

- Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople (GTAA) Study Update.
2. The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) Level II and its Addendum was scheduled to be completed in October. The SFRA Level II main Report is now complete and has been endorsed by the Environment Agency, LCC Flood Authority and UU.

Work is progressing with Council Engineers to finalise the Addendum which will need to be endorsed by the EA before it is published.

3. As indicated above there are continuing delays in completing the general highways evidence by LCC and also the specific highways study for Poulton-le-Fylde. Further to the Highways Report received at the end of August, LCC submitted a further report at the end of October. The October Report did not resolve the issues raised in respect of the August report and furthermore raised additional issues. At conference, the barrister advised that the October report did not represent robust evidence. Lengthy meetings were held with LCC Officers in November and December considering in detail the report and making necessary amendments. That process was due to be finalised at a meeting on 9th January 2017 which however had to be re-scheduled for the 26th January 2017.

As previously reported, LCC advised in June that it was it has been necessary to commission more detailed work with regards to the local highway network in Poulton-le-Fylde. The work was commissioned in August and was scheduled to be completed mid-December, (originally scheduled to be completed first week in November). A draft report was received in the last week before Christmas and comments on it were sent to LCC. The main concern is that the report does not comply with the study brief which required looking at the local highway network at Poulton and establishing what level of growth can be supported with deliverable mitigation.

As previously reported, Highways England provided the Council with evidence regarding the A585 including a spreadsheet tool to assist in assessing future capacity on the A585. Although in October HE advised that they were intending to supplement their evidence in January following further modelling for the A585 Scheme, HE advised in December that they will not be submitting any further evidence and Wyre should use the spreadsheet tool previously provided to the Council in preparing the Local Plan.

Discussions with HE also cover additional improvements to the A585 that are needed to support growth in Wyre.

As noted above and already reported in previous reports, 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 last 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. The Study is now complete and has been published on the Council's website.

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. This work is not yet ready for publication.
6. The draft Local Plan is being used as the basis for heritage and ecology assessments of draft allocations. The final list of allocations is not known however and so additional work may be necessary.
7. As reported in November there will not be a bespoke Health Impact Assessment, (HIA) on the Local Plan. The Local Plan process does not require HIA and in any event the Sustainability Appraisal covers health issues. Undertaking HIA could potentially delay the process. At this stage it is necessary to concentrate on completing the required evidence/assessments.

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. As previously reported further collaboration is needed with adjoining authorities and in particular with Fylde and Blackpool who share responsibility for housing needs within the joint Housing Market Area once the highways evidence is complete.

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

As reported previously the draft Local Plan prepared last summer was used to progress this work which could take six to eight weeks. An interim Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Report on the emerging local plan was received last October. The Report cannot be finalised until housing allocations are confirmed. Some 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. A Technical Note to engage with NE was received before Christmas. A meeting is scheduled with NE on the 24 January to discuss the AA requirements of potential allocation and the need for any mitigation/compensation. Following the meeting with NE there will be additional work which might take a number of weeks. It is expected that the scope of this work will be clarified and agreed at the meeting. The approach to dealing with issues relating to Pink Footed Geese (PFG) may not be agreed. Legal advice was sought regarding NE's approach to dealing with PFG elsewhere. Further legal advice may be necessary if agreement with NE is not reached on the 24 January.

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. Consequently progress on

other work has been affected. Further work in relation to the infrastructure Plan and Duty to Co-operate cannot be undertaken until the scale and distribution of housing to be delivered in the Local Plan is known. Furthermore various Local Plan Assessments cannot be finalised and may require additional work once allocations are confirmed.

- 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.
- 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 stakeholders. The draft Local Plan prepared last summer has been used as the basis of working with external organisations, however once allocations are confirmed further engagement with and input from various external organisation will be required in order to finalise the Local Plan, Infrastructure Plan and Duty to Cooperate Statement.
- d) As previously reported an application for a Neighbourhood Plan Area designation at Dolphinholme had been received. The Neighbourhood Plan at Dolphinholme will straddle the boundary with Lancaster. The application was processed and a decision confirming the Neighbourhood Area boundary was made in Wyre before Christmas. There are delays at Lancaster in confirming the boundary.

Since the last meeting, there has been various communications with the Parish Council regarding a Neighbourhood Plan for Barton. An application for Neighbourhood Plan Area designation at Barton has not yet been received but it is expected shortly.

To date neighbourhood planning work has not had a significant impact on Local Plan work. This is partly due to both neighbourhood plans at Barton and Dolphinholme being joint plan straddling the boundaries of Preston and Lancaster respectively and the adjoining authorities being the lead authority. 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.

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 that have not progressed their Local Plan to a certain stage by the 31st March 2017. There has not been any further detail on that proposal. Officers are in contact with DCLG who are aware that delays in the process are caused by delays in LCC completing the highways evidence. DCLG were also made aware of potential issues arising with NE with regards to Pink Footed Geese.

As referred to in the last Report the published Local Development Scheme (LDS) which is essentially the Local Plan project plan was revised by Full Council in July in order to expedite the preparation of the Local Plan. The published LDS indicates

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| Publication of Local Plan for public consultation | December 2016 |
| Submission Plan to Inspector for Examination | March 2017 |
| Hearing Sessions | Summer 2017 |
| Adoption | Early 2018 |

In view of the delays in completing highway evidence which is critical in the preparation of the Local Plan it is necessary to revise the timetable.

Provided the highways evidence is completed end of January, the revised date could be

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| Publication of Local Plan for public consultation | mid-June 2017 |
| Submission Plan to Inspector for Examination | October 2017 |
| Hearing Sessions | January 2018 |
| Adoption | June 2018 |

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