

We need your help to fight Labour's New Local Plan

If you share the Conservatives' real concerns about Labour's proposals then action on your part is essential.

Don't think it may never happen as Labour have already shown their intentions by allowing the Local Plan Proposals to be published.

Only overwhelming opposition from the residents of West Lancashire can force Labour to think again and come up with more acceptable proposals.

Labour are in control of West Lancashire Borough Council and have already used their majority to defeat the Conservatives' opposition to the Local Plan Proposals.

The Conservatives will fight the Proposals at every opportunity and will make Labour's New Local Plan a key issue at the Borough Council Elections next May.

If you would like to help us campaign against the New Local Plan then why not volunteer for one or more of the following:

- Sign up to receive copies of our regular newsletters
- Deliver a few leaflets a couple of times a year
- Display a window leaflet during election campaigns
- Attend our social events and political debates
- Join the Conservative Party
- Explore the possibility of standing as a Conservative candidate in local elections

To register for one or more of the above contact us by one of the following:

Email: office@westlancsconservatives.com Phone: 01695 572306

Website: www.westlancsconservatives.com

Write: West Lancashire Conservatives, 72c New Court Way, Ormskirk L39 2YT

Data Guarantee: Your data will be used by West Lancashire Conservative Association as part of our democratic engagement with electors. Where necessary, your data will be shared with Conservative Party Headquarters, our candidates and elected representatives. It will not be given or sold to anyone else. For more information please email us at office@westlancsconservatives.com

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West Lancashire Conservatives

Local Plan Newsletter

November 2018



West Lancashire Conservatives are fighting Labour's proposals for a new 30 year Local Plan. They consider it is unnecessary and if implemented, would radically change West Lancashire forever with dire consequences for the environment, traffic congestion and local services.

The Conservatives consider the Preferred Options to be fundamentally flawed due to :

- **An incomplete evidence base to justify the need for a new 30 year Local Plan to 2050**
- **No evidence of the necessary 'very special circumstances' needed to justify the release of 1,500 acres of highly productive agricultural land from the Greenbelt**
- **The lack of official forecasts and evidence to support the need for 16,000 new homes**
- **Insufficient evidence to justify 465 acres of new business parks in the greenbelt**
- **The absence of any assurance as to how the essential infrastructure investment could be delivered**
- **The proposal to stop safeguarding future developments sites, thereby allowing developers to cherry pick the most desirable**
- **The hugely negative impact the Preferred Options would have on the local environment**

The full arguments behind the above are set out in the middle pages of this newsletter.

How you can have your say and express your concerns

If you share all or some of the concerns raised in this leaflet then it is vital that you take part in the Public Consultation currently being run by West Lancashire Borough Council. You can do this by one of the following:

Complete the on-line comment form available on the Council's Website at: www.westlancs.gov.uk/lpr

You can email the Council on: localplan@westlancs.gov.uk

Download a comments form that is available on-line and return it to: Local Plan Team, West Lancashire Borough Council, 52 Derby Street, Ormskirk, L39 2DF

If you want to object or submit concerns then it is important that you restrict your comments to the planning issues as they will carry more weight and are more likely to be taken into account. An editable version of this leaflet is available on our website: www.westlancsconservatives.com

West Lancashire Borough Council Public Consultation Preferred Options – High Level Objections

Adopted Local Plan 2012/27

The existing Local Plan is meeting Local Housing Need, still has 9 years to run and has proven to be robust as evidenced earlier this year when the High Court ruled against the two rogue Applications for the land off Parrs Lane, Aughton. Since the adoption of the existing Local Plan in October 2013 there have been no rogue developments in West Lancashire.

It is performing to an acceptable level in terms of delivering the required housing numbers, is maintaining a 5 year supply of housing land and has the added safety net of providing additional land should it be required by way of the designated Safeguarded Plan B Sites.

The existing Adopted Local Plan 2012/27 specifically includes the provision of 5 yearly reviews to ensure it continues to deliver the required housing numbers and maintain a 5 year supply of housing sites.

Lack of evidence to support the need for a new 30 year Local Plan to 2050

A Local Plan for 30 years covers an extremely lengthy period, well beyond usual Local Plan timescales. It exceeds the period covered by the Strategic Housing and Employment Land Assessment (SHELMA) produced by Liverpool City Region Combined Authority that covers the period to 2037. It is impossible to forecast, in spatial planning terms, the housing and employment needs up to 2050.

None of the other local authorities in the Liverpool City Region are working on a new Local Plan to 2050. Indeed, it has not been possible to identify any other local authority in England that has embarked on such a course of action.

Release of 1,500 acres of highly productive agricultural land from the Greenbelt

A New Local Plan to 2050 is a high risk option as it is likely to be unacceptable to the Planning Inspectorate when it is tested at the required Public Enquiry. There is a lack of certainty regarding the housing and employment land need and demand for so far into the future. As such it fails to meet the Government's requirement as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework which states there has to be exceptional circumstances that are fully evidenced and justified before releasing land from the Greenbelt. This is clearly not the case given there are no official forecasts

for population and household growth in West Lancashire beyond 2041.

The Council's own Preferred Options Report, under Key Issues, states "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 (farming) in West Lancashire". Yet the Council wants to build on 1,500 acres of Grade 1 highly productive agricultural land. Given the lack of evidence to justify the excessive term and scope of the Preferred Options Report, the proposals are clearly flawed and unjustified.

Housing Need

There is a lack of evidence to justify the need for 16,000 new houses by 2050. In fact, there is no evidence at all beyond 2041 as no official forecasts exist beyond that year. Based on 2.5 persons per home this equates to a population growth of 40k. It is appreciated that there are hidden households (e.g. young families living with grandparents) and a trend for more people living alone but these will only make a marginal difference.

The Lancashire County Council Website carries forecasts (based on the latest information published by the Office of National Statistics) that states the present population of West Lancashire as 113,534 (2018) and forecasts that it will be 116,921 (2041), an increase of just 3,387. It also gives the current number of households as 46,530 (2018) and forecasts that it will be 49,030 (2041), an increase of just 2,500.

Taking a cautious average of 2.5 persons per household, 16,000 indicates a population increase of 40,000 by 2050 which is totally out of line with the official forecast of 3,387 by 2041.

The SHELMA (Strategic Housing & Employment Land Market Assessment) Consultation Draft prepared for Liverpool City Region Combined Authority includes the needs of West Lancashire and was produced in co-operation with WLBC but forecasts to 2037. The SHELMA forecasts the housing need for West Lancashire, even on a growth scenario, as 241 per annum plus 57per annum for specialist need e.g. care homes for the elderly.

The Preferred Option Report cites the NPPF Duty to Co-operate with Neighbouring Authorities as justification for the inclusion of 6,256 new houses to meet the alleged unmet future housing need of Sefton and other authorities in the Liverpool City Region.

Yet this is unjustified as all these local authorities have made provision to meet their forecasted housing and employment needs in their own Local Plans - Liverpool 2013/33, St Helens 2018/33, Knowsley 2010/28, Sefton 2012/30 Wirral 2012/28 and Halton 2014/37.

Employment Land Need

The Employment Land Requirement set out in the SHELMA is 63 hectares for the period to 2037 yet the Preferred Options Report proposed 190 hectares for the period to 2050. This is a disproportionate increase that is not justified by the additional 12 years so the obvious conclusion to be drawn is that West Lancashire is looking to compete for commercial developments with the Liverpool City Region. It is also proposing to release land in the Greenbelt to meet these developments when the LCR already has the necessary land, much of it Brownfield Sites, allocated in their existing Local Plans.

Infrastructure Investment

The Draft West Lancashire Local Plan Transport Assessment published on the Council's website gives forecasts for a huge increase in traffic flows should the Preferred Options be implemented and states that considerable investment would be required to facilitate sustainable growth.

Given the substantial cost and the very poor track record for infrastructure investment in West Lancashire, the likelihood of such investment in the future must be questionable and cause for serious concern.

While the Council's application for assistance from the Government's Housing Infrastructure Grant Scheme has been shortlisted, if eventually approved it would only fund the enabling infrastructure in respect of the Greater Skelmersdale proposals i.e. moving the gas pipeline and the access roads for commercial development either side of the M58 and the 3 Garden Villages.

The Preferred Options does not give any assurance about the impact on the already inadequate highway structure in West Lancashire. The volume of traffic on the rural roads during the daily peak times is already a problem and the lack of information must give rise to serious concerns that the situation will continue to deteriorate.

Congestion is particularly bad around Ormskirk's gyratory system, the A580 and the A59 in Burscough and Banks Bridge in Tarleton. The use of our rural roads as rat runs will substantially increase particularly in relation to traffic trying to access the M6 and avoiding the M58.

There are various vague statements in the Preferred Option for highway improvements across the Borough and these in themselves give rise to further concern e.g. a new relief road linking St Helens Road to Prescott Road that will worsen the existing traffic congestion in Aughton by the creation of a large rat run for traffic trying to avoid Ormskirk Town Centre.

Safeguarded Land

The Preferred Options include dispensing with the use of Safeguarded Land and allowing the market to decide when the identified sites will be developed. Such an abdication of responsibility by the Council would lead to a free for all with the Developers being able to cherry pick and build on the most desirable sites. It would also delay the development of less desirable sites i.e. in the less affluent areas or those more difficult to develop which usually provide the most affordable housing.

Failing to protect or release sites in line with the planned delivery of housing numbers will prove problematic particularly in relation to Skelmersdale. The rationale that letting the market decide will avoid planning appeals is unsound. While there will be no Plan B sites to defend, the change in policy will lead to more appeals in relation to contesting onerous planning conditions e.g. infrastructure investment, housing numbers and affordable housing percentages.

Impact on the Environment

Pollution from vehicles is already a major national issue given Nitrogen oxides are reported to cause 80,000 deaths a year. 16000 new homes equate to 40,000 additional residents and say 25,000 more cars plus the additional traffic, both cars and commercial vehicles, from the development of the proposed employment sites.

There is already a long-standing problem with pollution, in excess of the legal maximum, on parts of the Ormskirk gyratory system that is caused by congestion and the resultant stationary traffic. The Preferred Options can only increase traffic congestion and the resultant pollution.

Councillor David Westley

Conservative Group Leader

West Lancashire Borough Council