Preface

This document provides a short summary of the Issues and Options document produced to inform the development of the new Local Plan. It is not intended to replace the full document which must be referred to in order to fully appreciate the range of issues and options for addressing them that the Council are considering.

What is the Local Plan?

The purpose of a local plan is to guide how the borough physically develops over the next 15 years. It will establish a vision for Wyre, and the strategy for delivering that vision. It will identify the overall amount of different types of development needed to sustain the borough and where that development should, and should not, take place. It will also identify land that should be protected for its environmental or social use and encourage high quality design and a regard for our valued heritage and landscape.

What are the implications of not planning in this way?

- We will not be able to address the employment and housing needs of our population.
- The borough will be at risk of developments taking place that are not in the right location or are of the right type.
- Some areas might see even more development than they otherwise would have.
- We won’t be able to plan properly for infrastructure (e.g. new school places, road improvements).
- Developers will take the lead on where development happens – not the Council and the community.

Developing the Local Plan

In April 2012 the Council consulted on preferred options for a Core Strategy. The Core Strategy would have set the overall strategic framework for the Borough.

However, at the same time the Government published new national planning policy which advocates that local authorities should prepare a single planning policy document, a Local Plan, to provide both the overall strategic framework and the more detailed policies and allocations that guide development and protect valuable land and buildings. In addition, the regional planning system – which set the amount of housing to be built in each local authority – has been abolished meaning that the Council is required to assess and establish the development needs of the Borough.

Although the Council has decided not to progress the Core Strategy, the work undertaken to inform its preparation, including the consultation feedback received in 2012, is still of relevance and will be used to feed into the preparation of the Local Plan. However, we need to consider whether the 2012 preferred strategy is still relevant and appropriate in light of
new evidence. The production of an Issues and Options document will help us to develop a new, more up-to-date plan for the borough.

What is the Issues and Options Document?

The new Local Plan is at a very early stage in its production. The Issues and Options document describes a vision for the future of the Borough and identifies a number of key planning issues and options which will need to be considered by the Council in writing the Local Plan. It also describes three strategic options, each of which reflect a different approach to the distribution of development across the Borough, and includes a long list of potential sites for development. The document has been produced to enable the early involvement of the community and other stakeholders in the process so that their views can be taken into account when considering the overall Local Plan strategy and the different sites for development.

Key Issues

**Population and Settlement Pattern** - Our population is ageing significantly with a particularly large growth in the 75+ age group expected. At the same time there is projected to be a decrease in the working age population. This could have a negative impact on the potential of the local economy to grow and on ensuring that all of our communities remain sustainable. We need to consider how we best meet the needs of an ageing population whilst also retaining and attracting younger people.

Wyre has a dispersed settlement pattern with the larger towns of Fleetwood, Cleveleys, Thornton and Poulton-le-Fylde to the west of the borough on the north Fylde Coast Peninsula and the market town of Garstang to the east. Although the towns along the Fylde Coast Peninsula offer the greatest range of services, they contain a limited number of sites outside the Green Belt which are capable of accommodating development. The local plan therefore needs to consider whether sites should be released from the Green Belt to meet Wyre’s development needs, whilst also considering the extent to which smaller rural settlements can grow in order to meet development needs. This could potentially change the role of smaller rural settlements and it will be important for service and employment provision to be reviewed to ensure that these settlements are sustainable.

**Fleetwood** - Although recent developments in the town have contributed towards its revitalisation, Fleetwood still experiences economic and social deprivation. Ensuring that this revitalisation continues – including securing a future for Fleetwood Port as an integral part of the local economy - in a manner that preserves and enhances its unique historic assets is a key issue. Another important issue for Fleetwood is the connectivity of the town. Sections of the A585 which provides a links to the M55 are highly congested at particular times of the day and the town lacks a railway station. This may have an impact on investment decisions and it will therefore be important to ensure that the Local Plan seeks to improve the accessibility with the rest of Wyre and beyond.

**Housing** - Accommodating new housing to meet the needs of the population and support economic growth is the biggest challenge for the Local Plan which needs to balance the sustainability of settlements, impacts on the environment and infrastructure provision. There is a particular need for smaller dwellings for young people and families to support the local economy whilst the projected growth of the elderly population will also generate an
increased demand for appropriate housing. There is also a pressing need for affordable housing across most of the Borough but particularly in those parts of the borough where house prices are the highest. Whereas previously it has been possible to direct housing development to previously used “brownfield land” this is now in limited supply. A greater proportion of future development will therefore need to take place on greenfield sites, including sites in the countryside.

**Economy** - It is vital for the economy of Wyre – including its town and local centres - that existing businesses grow and new businesses are created. The availability of suitable land for business use is therefore a key issue. Potential growth sectors in Wyre include the chemicals, fish processing and energy sectors. Rural businesses are an important component of the local economy. The Local Plan needs to consider how employment opportunities in rural areas can be maintained and appropriate new opportunities created, particularly if our rural settlements are to grow to help meet the Borough’s housing needs. A particular demand for employment sites and premises has been identified in the Garstang and Catterall area in order to serve the economic needs of the eastern part of the Borough. Linking job opportunities with skills and education development is important not only to maximise benefits for the local population but also to reduce levels of unemployment.

**Natural Environment** - Wyre contains a large area of open countryside and coastline – acknowledged for its local, national and global importance - and a wide array of open spaces including parks, wildlife sites, woodlands, wetlands, a canal and coastline (often referred to as Green and Blue Infrastructure). Developing a network of Green and Blue Infrastructure within settlements and with links to the open countryside and the coastline is important both for wildlife and for the health and wellbeing of communities. A key issue for the Local Plan will therefore be the need to ensure that development does not place unacceptable pressure on the Green Infrastructure network or result in its erosion or loss. However, the pressure for growth may result in the loss of some areas of best quality agricultural land.

**Climate Change and Flood Risk** - Although the impacts of climate change are difficult to predict, it is generally regarded as being one of the most significant challenges for the world. Wyre is vulnerable to climate change impacts, with flood risk, and its consequent impact on health and the local economy, of particular concern. In some cases entire settlements lie within high flood risk areas. To exclude all development from such areas will affect the long term sustainability of these communities. Striking an appropriate balance between managing flood risk and ensuring the continued sustainability of our settlements will be a key challenge for the Local Plan. Supporting adaptation to climate change by, for example, avoiding development in areas of flood risk, protecting areas of green space and ensuring development is designed to respond to climate change will be important issues for the Local Plan.

**Built Environment** - The character of the borough’s towns and villages has developed over a period of many years and includes assets of heritage value whose significance it is important to protect. However, it is inevitable that many of the borough’s places will grow and change over the next 15 year. Ensuring new development does not have an unacceptable impact on the special character and distinctiveness of our settlements and

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1 Climate change refers to any change in climate over time, whether due to natural variability or as a result of human activity.
heritage assets – whilst also promoting high quality design across the borough - will therefore be a key challenge that the Local Plan must address.

**Infrastructure** – Developing communities that are sustainable will require investment in supporting infrastructure, including shops, schools, health facilities, community facilities and open spaces. Infrastructure capacity will potentially influence the capacity of different settlements to accommodate new development and, as a result, will affect the distribution of development across the Borough. Transport infrastructure and accessibility is a key issue for the Local Plan. Highways infrastructure and capacity has the potential to have a particularly significant impact on the amount and location of new development. Capacity issues are a particular constraint at certain locations on the A585 and A6 corridors at particular times of the day. The dispersed nature of settlements across rural Wyre coupled with reductions in bus services and limited access to the rail network currently places reliance upon private transport – something that is likely to increase as a result of new development.

**Vision and Strategic Objectives**

The Issues and Options document contains a Vision setting out how Wyre could look in 2013. It builds upon that contained in the 2012 Preferred Options document and takes on board comments made at that time. In summary it states that by 2031:

1. The challenges of an aging population will have been addressed and the borough will contain balanced and sustainable communities known for their quality of life.
2. The borough will have retained its local character and distinctiveness. Development takes place in a sustainable manner supported by the necessary infrastructure.
3. The borough will contain a high quality housing offer that provides choice and meets the needs of all our communities, including the elderly, first time buyers and young families.
4. The economy will be strong and diverse, supported by an excellent educational offer.
5. Wyre will be maximising its tourism and recreational potential by drawing on its many attractive features that offer a diverse range of opportunities for various activities.
6. Fleetwood will be a thriving town with a revitalised and successful town centre. Fleetwood Port will be an integral part of the local economy on the Fylde Coast.
7. Poulton-le-Fylde, Cleveleys and Thornton will continue to be vibrant towns with a distinctive character and where local heritage and environmental assets has been protected and enhanced. Traffic issues within Poulton-le-Fylde town centre will have been addressed.
8. Rural areas will however continue to thrive, whilst providing a more diverse economy. Garstang will continue to prosper as a vibrant market town, providing services, facilities and employment opportunities for the wider rural area.
9. The Borough will remain largely rural in character with villages set in attractive, open countryside and the special qualities of the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty will have been conserved and enhanced.
10. There will have been substantial improvements to accessibility and connectivity. Existing accessibility issues along the A585 will have been tackled and traffic through the town centre of Poulton-le-Fylde will have been reduced.

To deliver this vision, the Issues and Options document identified twelve strategic objectives, which, in summary, aim to:

1. Retain and attract young people and families to live in the Borough.
2. Facilitate economic growth encouraging investment and job creation.
3. Facilitate tourism growth creating a distinct offer within Wyre on the Fylde Coast.
4. Contribute to the health and wellbeing of residents and promote healthy lifestyles.
5. Protect and improve the natural and built environment.
6. Provide a range of new, high quality housing to meet the needs of all sections of Wyre’s community, including affordable housing and housing for the elderly.
7. Ensure good quality and a broad range of services and to promote the vitality and viability of town, district, local and neighbourhood centres.
8. Locate new development in areas that are accessible with a range of services.
9. Ensure that new development is supported by the necessary infrastructure.
10. Minimise the Borough’s environmental footprint, including pollution and flood risk.
11. Mitigate against and adapt to climate change.
12. Ensure the sustainability of rural communities and a diverse and resilient rural economy.

**Options**

A key element of the Local Plan is defining a Spatial Strategy which identifies the locations within the Borough where development will be directed in order to deliver the Vision and Strategic Objectives. When determining the approach to the spatial distribution of development a key challenge is how to accommodate this growth in a way which makes the most of the Borough’s resources and minimises harm to the natural and built environment and existing communities.

The Issues and Options document identifies three potential options. In summary these are:

**Option 1 – Focus on the Fylde Coast Peninsula main urban area** - Under this option development would be mainly focused on the more urbanised settlements of Fleetwood, Cleveley’s, Thornton and Poulton-le-Fylde, with a moderate amount in the A6 corridor settlements and lesser amounts of development amongst rural villages. Delivering this option would require the release of greenfield land on the edge of settlements and possibly green belt.

**Option 1 Advantages:**

1. Has the greatest potential to maintain and strengthen the role of the main urban areas.
2. The peninsula has the greatest concentration of services, facilities, public transport options and jobs in the borough.
3. Supports the continued revitalisation of Fleetwood and benefit the town and local centres on the peninsula.
4. Implies the lowest levels of development in rural areas and less pressure on the countryside.
5. May deliver sufficient development to support the delivery of a new road connecting Poulton-le-Fylde to Garstang Road East (east of Poulton Industrial Estate). This could reduce through traffic in Poulton town centre.

**Option 1 Disadvantages:**

1. Makes the least contribution to the housing needs - including affordable housing - of rural settlements.
2. Settlements could miss out on the growth required to sustain existing facilities/services.
3. Could place pressure on existing infrastructure, including the road network, particularly amongst the peninsula settlements.
4. Results in the greatest pressure to release land from the Green Belt.
5. The level of flood risk in this area may act as a serious constraint to development.

**Figure 1: Option 1 – Focus on the Fylde Coast Peninsula main urban area**

**Option 2 – A6 corridor focus** – Under this option development would be mainly focused on settlements, particularly Garstang, closely related to the A6, with moderate development in the more urban peninsula and lesser amounts of development amongst rural villages. Unlike Spatial Option 1, this option would also consolidate and expand Winmarleigh and Nateby, both of which are in relatively close proximity to the A6 and Garstang.

**Option 2 Advantages:**

1. Provides a greater level of flexibility in terms of choice of housing and employment sites particularly in the Garstang area, improving housing choice and affordability.
2. Helps to maintain a healthy town centre in Garstang, supporting the town’s role as an important rural service centre.
3. Lessens but not necessarily eliminates the need for Green Belt land to be released.
4. The A6 corridor has a strong housing market and high levels of development viability.

**Option 2 Disadvantages:**

1. Increased requirement to release countryside sites on the edge of existing settlements along the A6.
2. The A6 has less public transport connectivity than the urban peninsula and development could result in more car based commuting.
3. The scale of development around Winmarleigh and Nateby may not be sufficient to attract investment in new services and facilities.

4. Some settlements may not grow sufficiently to retain population, facilities & services.

5. Greater pressure on existing infrastructure, especially the highway network within and outside of the borough, for example at Junction 1 of the M55.

Option 3 – Dispersal – This option involves a wide spread of moderate development across urban and rural settlements as opposed to having a particular focus in one area. Compared with options 1 and 2, a greater proportion of development would be directed towards rural settlements including Great Eccleston, Hambleton, Knott End/Presell, Inskip and Stalmine and retains the option of expanding Winmarleigh and Nateby.

Option 3 – Advantages:

1. Makes the greatest contribution towards the supply of housing in rural areas, improving housing choice and affordability.
2. Supports local service provision and may improve the range of services on offer.
3. Provides a greater choice of housing and employment sites.
4. Would lessen, but not necessarily eliminate, the need to release Green Belt land.
5. More development would be directed to areas that have a strong housing market.
6. Minimises the pressure placed on existing infrastructure by distributing development more evenly.

Option 3 – Disadvantages:

1. Leads to an increased expansion of rural settlements into the open countryside.
2. The amount of development in any one place may be insufficient to attract investment in the services and facilities needed to make places sustainable.
3. Therefore raises issues of accessibility to key services and may result in an unsustainable reliance on cars instead of public transport.
4. However, the local road network capacity in the more rural areas may be inadequate.

![Figure 3: Option 3 – Dispersal](image)

**Potential Sites for Development**

The map below is based on a long list of potential sites for development across the Borough. It is important to note that no decision has been made on which of the identified sites will be taken forward as allocations in the Local Plan and it should also be noted that the boundaries of individual sites may also be amended. The decision over which sites should be allocated will be influenced by background evidence and the consultation feedback received. The sites are therefore being presented at this early stage to enable comments to be made on constraints that may inhibit development or matters that will need to be taken into account and addressed before a site can be allocated. The choice of Spatial Strategy will influence the distribution of development and also the number of sites that need to be identified in each part of the Borough. These sites have been identified from a range of sources, including evidence base studies and submissions by owners and other interested parties.

Please note that the Issues and Options document contains a number of maps that show these sites on an area-by-area basis and this should be referred to identify precise locations and boundaries.
Figure 4: Potential Sites for Development

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