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## WYRE LOCAL PLAN HEARING: THE RT HON BEN WALLACE MP

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### Welcome the development of the Local Plan

- I am very proud to have represented Wyre since 2005. It is a wonderful place to live and work with a well-educated, hardworking and adaptable population.
- I welcome the Local Plan and the opportunity it gives to local people to have a say in the way development occurs in their communities.
- I hope the Plan once in place, will act as a tool for sustainable growth and shield from unwanted development.

### Positive aspects/principles of the Plan:

There are many positive aspects of this Plan and I would just like to mention a few:

The positive vision which it creates for the future, particularly the aim to support diverse economic development.

The commitment to high quality design which responds positively to local character ensuring that new development is integrated with its surroundings, creating a sense of place and local distinctiveness.

The intension to maximise the use of previously developed land where possible across the Borough and for the majority of new built development to take place within existing settlement boundaries.

Linked to this is the policy of strategic areas of separation – something which I called for - ensuring that rural settlements retain their separate identity:

- Garstang and Cabus
- Garstang/Bonds and Bowgreave
- Bowgreave and Catterall
- Fleetwood and Thornton

I also welcome the recognition which Wyre has given to the flood risk in Churchtown and St Michael's and there is to be no new housing in Churchtown and only limited development in St Michael's (23) as a consequence.

I am pleased to see a specific policy for the Forest of Bowland, which includes Calder Vale and Oakenclough in my constituency. I believe this provides a balance between protecting the settlements and flexibility to enable them to evolve and remain sustainable.

I know my constituents value the open and rural character of the countryside across Wyre and that measures are being taken to protect this while making allowances to support the rural economy. I have been concerned in the past that Wyre's planning policy has not recognised the need to support rural businesses such as farms by permitting development for new agricultural buildings and dwellings for agricultural workers. It must be remembered that farmers are the custodians of the landscapes which we cherish. These landscapes can only be maintained and protected if farms are able to adapt and remain economically viable.

My constituents also support the policy that stipulates that wind turbines will only be permitted when they have the backing of local communities affected by them. I have long called for a policy of this nature.

### Spatial plan

At the Issues and Options Stage of the development of the Local Plan in 2015, I supported new development being concentrated in Fleetwood, with less development dispersed across the rest of the Borough. *(Note: The Council is pursuing a limited dispersal policy which is constrained by highway capacity.)*

I also asked the Council to reconsider the assessment it had made for future housing need in the Borough.

### Housing Numbers

At the Issues and Options stage the Council assessed *(based on the Fylde Coast Strategic Housing Market Assessment which was undertaken by Turley Associates in February 2014)* that the housing need lies between 340 and 485 dwellings per annum, with a total requirement for the Local Plan period of between 6400 and 9700 dwellings.

Building on the work of the Issues and Options paper the Local Plan sets out the Council's view that the Objectively Assessed Housing Need (OAHN) is 9,580 dwellings over the period 2011 to 2031. But has determined that due to constraints it will deliver 8,225 dwellings or annually 411 dwellings within the local plan period 2011- 2031. *Note: The Local plan therefore delivers within the Local Plan period, nearly 86% of the OAHN requirement.*

Like my constituents I remain concerned about the housing need figures which the Local Plan is based upon, which I consider to be excessive.

As part of the Government's consultation on "Planning for the right homes in the right places" it proposed a standardised methodology for calculating housing need and published an indicative assessment of housing need for each local planning authority area. For Wyre the assessment of housing need using this new assessment methodology was 313 dwellings per annum *for the period 2016 to 2026*. This is significantly lower than the figure of 411 which the Council is using and I fear will lead to problems down the line, such as land

banking and challenges to the Local Plan which result in development outside the areas which the Council is allocating for development, as is the case in Preston.

#### Site allocations and capacity

While overall housing numbers and potential sites were discussed in the Issues and Options paper, I have also been concerned that the potential housing numbers per settlement were not published until very late in the development of the Local Plan, in September last year.

#### Inskip

Inskip is a case in point. The Draft Local Plan published in September proposed for the first time the siting of 282 new dwellings in Inskip (which at its core is currently a settlement of 236 houses) in the period of 2011 to 2031, which is unsustainable. There is no demand locally for such a significant number of new homes. Development on this scale will adversely alter the nature and character of the village and put pressure on the surrounding narrow, winding and undulating local country lanes. The lack of employment opportunities locally mean that any new residents will be required to travel beyond the village to secure employment.

#### Great Ecclestone

The proposal to develop 617 new dwellings in Great Ecclestone raises similar concerns. One of the sites carried forward for development in Great Ecclestone (SA3/3) is also significantly larger than the site boundaries included in the Issues and Options paper.

#### Barton

I am also concerned that significant development is proposed in Barton (163 over the lifetime of the plan), despite less than half of the settlement falling within the boundary of Wyre. In setting this housing target, I am not convinced that adequate consideration has been given to the significant developments taking place within the Preston side of Barton. Local residents feel that, given their location at the very edge of the Borough and the fact that the council boundary runs down the A6, no overall vision for the settlement has been considered and this is to its detriment.

#### Thornton

I have consistently objected to the development of land off Lambs Road in Thornton. While planning permission has already been granted for 165 new dwellings the Local Plan goes further allocating the wider site for a total of 360 new dwellings. Such development would aid the destruction of the rural character of the area and I fear that the local road network would be unable to cope with the increased traffic which would be generated as a result of the development. To develop 1582 new dwellings in Thornton over the lifetime of the plan is ill-conceived given the pressures on the highway network and the increased flood risk given the incidents which occurred in November.

## Poulton

Poulton faces similar transport pressures and I fear the level of development proposed here will be unsustainable. Of the 1421 new dwellings proposed, over 1000 new dwellings have already been granted permission and have either being built or are under construction. I would have liked the Council to have facilitated a more gradual approach to this development so that the impacts could have been assessed before more development was permitted.

I am also concerned about the proposal to remove the greenbelt between Poulton and Carleton which will ultimately lead to the merger of the two settlements and see the historic settlement of Carleton subsumed by Poulton.

## Stalmine

The Road Safety Foundation has assessed the A588 as the third most dangerous road in Britain, despite this the Local Plan proposes 216 new dwellings in Stalmine. I fear for the impact this will have on road safety. There is a further planning application currently lodged with Wyre Council for large scale development outside the sites designated by this Plan. I hope the Council will refuse this application and uphold the Local Plan.

## Garstang

Again in Garstang we see that development there has been developer-led with 658 of the 841 new dwellings proposed in the town, already granted planning permission. Local residents have expressed to me their concerns that they have not had the opportunity to play any meaningful role in how their town expands and fear the impact on the flood risk.

## Bowgreave and Catterall

While planning permission has already been granted for developments in Bowgreave and Catterall which fulfil the Council's housing allocations made in the Local Plan, I do fear that these settlements will be fundamentally changed by the scale of the development there and the pressure which these will place on the A6. What I think is crucial here is that the Council uphold the Local Plan's housing designations to ensure that sites which have not been allocated for development are not granted permission.

## Hambleton

As in Bowgreave and Catterall, planning permission has already been granted for the 286 new homes designated for Hambleton. This does demonstrate that the development of the Local Plan has lagged behind developer initiated development. I objected to the proposed development of 165 new homes on Arthurs Lane on the basis that the development will have an adverse impact on the local highway network and the character of the village, the

loss of agricultural land and the extension to the settlement boundary which the development will bring.

### Housing summary

I acknowledge that new homes are required across the Borough, to ensure that young people are able to continue to live in the communities where they have grown up and that places are able to evolve. However, I believe the Council has over estimated housing need. If the Government's housing need calculation was used then 1960 fewer new homes would need to be developed over the lifetime of the Plan. This would relieve many of the pressures which I have outlined. The fact that the last Local Plan lapsed in 2006 means that development in the Borough has been developer-led for over a decade. I am glad that the Council has tackled this head on by publishing its Local Plan. Once the Local Plan is fully adopted I hope the local authority will use its powers to enforce the Plan and stop developers who propose further development in excess of the housing targets for each settlement. A strong plan with credible housing targets is crucial to this.

### Conclusions

Wyre faces many challenges in the future from flooding, highway constraints, changing economic and employment trends, an ageing population and it is vital that all these issues continue to be taken into consideration. Wyre has a diverse economic base and our population is well educated and adaptable and I am pleased that the Local Plan seeks to support these factors to make the Borough attractive to employers.