

**WYRE LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION**

**OPENING REMARKS**

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**ON BEHALF OF WYRE COUNCIL**

**15<sup>th</sup> May 2018**

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 My name is Réa Psillidou and I am the Planning Policy and Economic Development Manager for Wyre Council. I would first like to welcome the Inspector, Mr Mark Dakeyne to Wyre, to thank all residents and stakeholders who have been involved in the lengthy process of producing the Local Plan and to also thank the Programme Officer Tony Blackburn for managing the examination process very efficiently.
- 1.2 The purpose of this opening statement is to do no more than set the scene for the hearing sessions forming part of the examination, which we are firmly of the view will demonstrate that the LP is a “sound” document.
- 1.3 Local Plans are at the heart of the planning system and it is essential that they are in place and kept up to date. The saved Wyre Local Plan was adopted in 1999. It is vital that Wyre has a new Local Plan in place as soon as possible to provide an up-to-date policy framework for decision making, to protect our important heritage and environmental assets and to ensure that growth results in sustainable development supported by necessary infrastructure.
- 1.4 The Council firmly considers that it has submitted what is a ‘sound’ LP which addresses the key issues in the Borough; it is based on robust evidence, stakeholder and community consultation; and it has been prepared in full compliance with legislative requirements and Government guidance.
- 1.5 The emerging Wyre Local Plan has been produced in accordance with the 2012 Local Planning Regulations (as amended)<sup>1</sup>. It has been subject to public input and scrutiny through the preparation and publication stages. The council has engaged proactively with local communities and their representatives at parish and town council and ward member levels. The Council has established and trained Planning Ambassadors nominated by each Parish and Town Council to act as a conduit between the Council and each Parish and Town Council on planning matters, including the preparation of the Local Plan.
- 1.6 Publicity for the preparation, publication and submission stages has been extensive and involved both a variety of engagement methods, including staffed exhibitions, social media and the use of existing community and business networks. The public, stakeholders and interested organisations, including the specific and general consultation bodies, have had an opportunity to make their views known. The council has taken these

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<sup>1</sup> Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

– sometimes disparate - views on board as part of the Plan preparation process to produce a legally compliant and sound plan.<sup>2</sup>

1.7 Public engagement on the Local Plan has taken place at two main stages:

- Local Plan Preparation stage (Reg. 18) – Issues and Options document 2015.<sup>3</sup>
- Publication stage (Reg. 19) – Publication Draft Wyre Local Plan 2017.<sup>4</sup>

1.8 The Council received 2,951 representations from 763 organisations and individuals on the Issues and Options document.<sup>5</sup> 2,625 of these are answers to the six consultation questions in the Issues and Options document relating to matters including the spatial distribution of development, the issues covered in the report and the identified potential development sites. The rest of the representations related to general comments.<sup>6</sup>

1.9 The Publication Draft Wyre Local Plan generated a total of 1,151 representations from 253 individuals and organisations. Most sections of the plan and policies attracted some comment but in particular Policy SP1. Matters covered included the objectively assessed housing need, rural development and highway constraints Site allocations where residential development is proposed attracted the most comments, the majority of which objected to the allocation.<sup>7</sup> Representations from the development industry sought to an increase in housing requirement and supply through new or extended allocations.<sup>8</sup>

1.10 The LP sets the Council's 'spatial strategy' for the future of the Borough providing the spatial framework for 'place making' in Wyre. It is a document that has involved many hours of both officers' and members' time and has received the highest degree of scrutiny and consideration; and whilst it is accepted that it may be capable of some improvements (as a result of this process), it is nonetheless a document which the Council is proud to present to this examination.

1.11 The Council has put forward a schedule of modifications arising from consideration of representations received on the 'Publication' draft Local Plan last September and the preparation for these hearing sessions. The Council considers that these proposed changes improve the clarity of and strengthen the document and do not alter the overall

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<sup>2</sup> The statement of Consultation (SD007a) and the Council's Statement on the Inspector's MIQs Matter 1 - Legal compliance, procedural requirements and the duty to cooperate (EL3.001) demonstrate that the Local Plan has met the legal requirements of public consultation and publicity.

<sup>3</sup> Submission Document Library Reference ED054

<sup>4</sup> Submission Document Library Reference SD002

<sup>5</sup> Details are set out in the Statement of Consultation (SD007a), pages 18-20

<sup>6</sup> Details of representations are set out in the Statement of Consultation (SD007a)

<sup>7</sup> Details of representations are set out in the Statement of Consultation (SD007a)

<sup>8</sup> A full summary of the matters raised can be found in the council's Statement of Consultation, (SD007a).

substance of the spatial strategy and that of individual policies.

## **2. Context**

- 2.1 Wyre is part of the Fylde Coast sub-region in Lancashire. It extends from the Irish Sea and Morecambe Bay to and including parts of the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is a borough of great variety and diverse character. It includes the urban areas of Fleetwood, Cleveleys, Thornton and Poulton-le-Fylde to the west of the Borough and a number of smaller settlements of varying sizes including the market town of Garstang, to the east and south of the river Wyre and set within attractive countryside. The countryside is a multifunctional resource in Wyre that provides an attractive setting to the towns and villages, includes a number of areas of ecological significance and forms the basis of an established farming economy. Wyre forms part of the Lancashire LEP's 'energy coast' and includes the Hillhouse Technology Enterprise Zone. Key industries include chemical and advance manufacturing. In Fleetwood despite the demise of the fishing industry, there is an established fish and seafood processing business base. The natural and historic heritage of Wyre also supports a vibrant visitor economy.
- 2.2 However the Borough is faced with a number of significant challenges including a constrained highway network and limited rail connections, extensive areas affected by flood risk, a relative low wage economy, an ageing population, a limited housing offer and a very weak town centre at Fleetwood.
- 2.3 Transport connections with other parts of the Fylde Coast and Lancashire and the wider North West along the A585(T) and the A6 pose challenges in terms of capacity. Junctions and arterial routes are regularly severely congested raising safety concerns. Rail services in Wyre are limited to Poulton-le-Fylde Station, though there is also a tram service connecting Fleetwood and Cleveley to Blackpool.
- 2.4 The problems facing the Borough are long standing and recognised.

## **3. Wyre Local Plan (LP)**

- 3.1 The Local Plan is an important corporate document and its preparation has been a Council priority. It is a key mechanism for the Council to deliver its key priorities set out in the Corporate Business Plan - facilitate economic and housing growth, healthier communities, cleaner and greener Wyre and a basis for collaboration with partners and the communities.

- 3.2 The LP is a positive strategy to manage change and secure the creation of sustainable communities, meet development needs and facilitate economic growth. It has a pivotal role in the future success not only of the Council's vision for Wyre but also of that of our partners especially infrastructure and service providers.
- 3.3 The LP presents a strategy of managed growth within environmental limits. It is a strategy informed by sound and robust evidence of development needs, the capacity of the environment to accommodate development and the capacity of infrastructure to support it. The focus has been to maximise opportunities that best present a sustainable outcome. The LP ensures that growth will be delivered to a high quality respecting both the historic and environmental heritage of the Borough.
- 3.4 The LP responds positively to the challenges by seeking opportunities to meet the development needs of the borough. Given Wyre's character, local circumstances and development needs, we have developed an approach – supported by evidence – that would be effective in meeting most of Wyre's needs in the context of the borough. Although the Council fully understands that there is a need to boost significantly the supply of new homes and the requirement to fully meet objectively assessed needs, the Local Plan can only deliver 86%<sup>99</sup> of its housing needs due to constraints. This situation is fully justified by the evidence underpinning the Local Plan.
- 3.5 The LP has been prepared with careful thought as well as a detailed evaluation of an extensive evidence base. It is derived from our knowledge of the characteristics of the population in Wyre, the diverse character of the Borough, the function of individual settlements, the economy, the housing market, and our sense of place in this part of Lancashire.
- 3.6 The LP is ambitious reflecting the Council's understanding of its obligations and the challenges being faced but it represents a realistic and balanced response. The Council is confident that the LP spatial strategy is robust and deliverable. It will provide certainty to the community and development industry. It will assist our partners in the delivery of their work programmes, influencing and stimulating investment.
- 3.7 With improved employment opportunities, a healthy housing market and a quality of life

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<sup>99</sup> This was assessed on the basis of the 31 March 2017 monitoring information set out in the Housing Background Paper (ED010). Updated monitoring information as at 31 March 2018 (set out in the Council's Response to MIQs Matter 4 – EL3 004) shows that land supply has not materially changed in the intervening year.

which protects and fosters our unique environment, we can realise our vision for the Borough.

#### **4. Conclusion**

- 4.1 The Wyre Local Plan is 'spatial' in nature addressing the key issues in the Borough. The Council is keen to make real progress and ensure that the Local Plan is adopted in an expedient manner in order to provide up to date spatial policies to manage growth and change and provide certainty to communities and developers. The saved Local Plan provides a very limited strategic policy framework for directing and managing change.
- 4.2 The NPPF states in paragraph 10 that: "Plans... need to take local circumstances into account, so that they respond to the different opportunities for achieving sustainable development in different areas." The LP does this.
- 4.3 The LP cannot address everyone's issues. This means the Council will often be in the middle between those who think we are going too far and those who think we are not going far enough. As such, the Council considers that the Plan takes a balanced approach to promoting sustainable growth, within the particular constraints, striking the right balance to create flexibility and certainty.
- 4.4 With regards to this examination to determine whether the LP is "sound" the Council considers:
- a. That it has been prepared in accordance with the correct legal and policy procedures;
  - b. That it is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework and Guidance and other plans and policies at national and regional level;
  - c. That it is coherent, consistent and effective;
  - d. That it is 'spatial' in nature addressing the spatial implications of economic, social and environmental change and provides a long term strategic direction;
  - e. That it is reasonably flexible in order that it can deal with different circumstances;
  - f. That it is deliverable and there are clear mechanisms for implementation and monitoring.
- 4.5 The Council welcomes the opportunity offered by these hearings to debate the soundness of the LP and will do all we can to be of assistance in these proceedings.

4.6 Nonetheless the LP is firmly commended to you Sir as a sound document.

**5. The Council's Team**

5.1 The Council's team will change depending on the matters to be discussed at each session. In a moment I will introduce the Council's Planning Policy Team and Counsel who will be advising my team where necessary. The Planning Policy Team will form the core team at these hearings but other officers of the Council and Lancashire County Council and external consultants will participate as necessary.

**Réa Psillidou (Miss)**

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Wyre Council

15<sup>th</sup> May 2018