

**Wyre Borough Council**  
**Overview and Scrutiny Committee**  
**8<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

**Wyre Local Plan Preparation Update**

**1. Update on current Progress on the Local Plan**

**i. Issues and Options Consultation**

Public consultation on the Local Plan Issues and Option Report finished on the 7 of August 2015. However representations received up to the end of August were accepted on this occasion due to the importance of community engagement at this stage in the plan process. 759 representations were received which is twice as many as expected. This meant that the task to register and upload the representations onto a database so that they can be viewed on the Council's website was a more resource intensive task than anticipated and was not completed until the end of September. Personal details also had to be redacted before the representations were scanned.

The consideration of representations was given priority and was completed before Christmas. There is now a draft 800 page report including a summary of the matters raised and a response. This also was more resource intensive than anticipated due to the greater number of representations received as well the size of representations. This has meant that some other evidence base work has been delayed.

**ii. Housing Requirement and distribution.**

It was reported in November that following a conference with Counsel it was necessary to carry out sensitivity testing on the Employment Land Study (ELS) Update using alternative economic forecasts prepared by Oxford Economics and Cambridge Econometrics. The sensitivity testing is complete and concluded that the Experian forecasts used in The ELS Update are appropriate.

The results of the sensitivity testing for the ELS Update has fed into the update of the update Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). This work is near completion and will give the unconstrained housing Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) figure.

It was reported at the August and November meetings that establishing a housing requirement requires evidence relating to flood risk & highways which have both been delayed. Whilst progress has been made, there have been further delays in particular with regards to the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and Highways Evidence. See below under Evidence Base.

### **iii. Infrastructure Planning and viability work**

Meetings with infrastructure providers continue to be held. Since the November Report, meetings have been held with the Greater Preston CCG, LCC Higher Education Team, the Fire Service and Police. Meetings are being planned with National Grid and Network Rail.

Meetings with Lancashire County Highways and Highways England have been ongoing (see Evidence Base below).

Further meetings with all infrastructure providers will be necessary once the scale and distribution of development has been determined.

Work is progressing on updating the viability evidence. This will feed into the determination of the housing land supply.

### **iv. Evidence Base**

- The Employment Land Review (ELR) update and sensitivity testing are now complete.
- The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) update has now progressed. The update report due to be completed in November was delayed to take account of the sensitivity testing for the ELS Update. The SHMA Update report will determine the unconstrained objectively assessed need figure for housing which the local plan will need to accommodate. The update includes taking account of the latest published household projections, and reconsiders certain assumptions in relation to job creation and unemployment. It is anticipated that this work will be completed early February 2016.
- Completion of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) Level II has been delayed as the draft assessment was due to be completed by the end of October. The SFRA was being carried out by the Council's engineers; but Consultants have now been appointed to complete the work. The draft SFRA will need to be forwarded to the Environment Agency, LCC and United Utilities for their comments/endorsements before it can be finalised. The consultants will provide the necessary information to enable to progress the housing allocations work by the middle of February.
- Progress has been made in relation to highways evidence. The evidence commissioned by Wyre regarding the distribution of traffic from new developments on the strategic and local highways network is now complete. In addition LCC has commissioned additional evidence to assess the impact of the proposed Junction 2 on the M55 to Junctions 1 and 3 on the M55. Both LCC and Highways England are due to report end of January and a project meeting is scheduled for the 4<sup>th</sup> of February. Unless there are further delays the highways evidence to inform the Local Plan should be in place early in February.
- Further to the meetings held with Parish and Town Council ambassadors and ward members for unparished areas to consider a draft of the Settlement Study, a separate meeting was held with Out Rawcliffe PC. Out Rawcliffe is not considered to be a settlement for the purposes of the Settlement Study.
- The Green Belt Review is now complete.
- Completion of the Affordable Housing Needs Study has been delayed. Officers had a number of concerns that needed to be addressed. A final draft has been submitted for consideration and it is expected to be signed off by the end of January.

- Consultants have been commissioned jointly with Blackpool and Fylde Council 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 'Traveling Showperson' published in August 2015. The study is scheduled to be completed by the end of March.
- Following the Ministerial Statement published in June 2015 we are now required to identify areas suitable for wind energy developments in the Local Plan. We are reviewing existing evidence to establish what if anything further is needed.
- The Local Centre Study update has not yet commenced due to other work pressures. This will be progressed by the new Planning Officer who starts on the 8 February 2016.
- Following a meeting with Heritage England, we are now advised that we will have to carry out heritage assessments for allocations in the Local Plan. This is an additional task not previously programmed. It will need to be undertaken once allocations have been identified. Ecological and landscape assessments will also be necessary in relation to specific allocations.

**v. Development Management Policies.**

Work is progressing in drafting the Development Management Policies. As reported in August work is on-going with the Development Management Team regarding the effectiveness of existing saved local plan policies and current gaps in policy. Internal workshops/meetings will also be held with other sections of the Council including Environmental Protection and Housing and external partners/stakeholders.

**vi. Duty to Co-operate Meetings**

Meetings have now been held with all adjoining local authorities to establish strategic cross boundary issues. A meeting with the LEP Secretariat has now taken place.

Further meetings with adjoining authorities will be necessary if Wyre is not in a position to meet in full its Objectively Assessed Need for housing.

**vii. Sustainability Appraisal**

The next stage in the process would be to assess various housing scenarios as well as the draft policies and proposals in the draft Local Plan.

**2. Issues affecting progress**

- Changes in Government Policy such as that on wind energy and Gypsy and Travellers will require further work.
- The Housing and Planning Bill is going through Parliament and will introduce further planning reforms. These might have direct implications for the Local Plan and/or divert resources. Two main matters that will require consideration are 'Right to Build' and 'Brownfield land registers'. In addition, there might be further work required to establish the general need for 'caravans and park homes' and also 'starter homes' as part of the affordable housing requirement.

- Whilst there has been some slippage in completing the update of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), the SHMA is now on track and expected to be completed by the end of January.
- Establishing the Local Plan housing requirement has also been affected by delays in progressing the highways and flood-risk evidence.

A further delay in relation to both pieces of evidence is a concern. It will be difficult to progress the Local Plan and decide on allocations without advice on highway capacity and flood risk which are major constraints and issues raised through the consultation. **This matter is critical and could potentially delay the Local Plan programme.**

- Progressing the Local Plan requires engagement with various organisations including the County Council, adjoining authorities and infrastructure providers. These are time consuming tasks and depend on a timely response from the various organisations. For example, to prepare the Infrastructure Plan we will require input from all the infrastructure providers. Work with infrastructure providers could not progress to conclusion until we have established the scale and distribution of development across the Borough.

I am pleased to report that the Local Plan Team will be fully staffed from the 8<sup>th</sup> of February 2016 with the appointment of a Planning Officer. This post has been vacant since 1 November 2015 after the previous post holder was promoted to Senior Planning Officer following the departure of the previous post holder in August 2015.

### 3. Critical Work in the next three months

- Completing the work on the housing requirement which involves completing key evidence on constraints such as flood risk and highways. This will inform work on Infrastructure Planning and may require further engagement under the duty to co-operate.
- Completing work in relation to the Development Management Policies.
- Progressing other Evidence work

### 4. Overall Programme

As a consequence of the delays and additional evidence requirements there is slight slippage in the programme. Overall however it is considered that the Local Plan will still be adopted in 2017.

Initial draft Local Plan	Spring/Summer 2016
Publication draft Local Plan	Late 2016
Submission	Early 2017
Adoption	Autumn 2017

Réa Psillidou  
 Planning Policy and Economic Development Manager  
 22 January 2016