



<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Item No.</b>
Cllr Gordon McCann, Economy Portfolio Holder and Michael Ryan, Corporate Director of People & Places	Cabinet	16 January 2013	9

## **Wyre Employment Land and Commercial Leisure Study (October 2012)**

### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To inform Cabinet of the recently completed Wyre Employment Land and Commercial Leisure Study (October 2012) and seek endorsement of the Study's content for Planning Policy formulation and Development Management purposes.

### **2. Outcomes**

- 2.1 An approved Wyre Employment Land and Commercial Leisure Study (2012) will be used to further develop policy content of the emerging Wyre Local Plan, particularly the Local Plan Strategy and Core Policies and Site Allocations and Development Management documents which are anticipated to be completed by the end of 2014 and 2016 respectively. An approved Study will also be used in the determination of planning applications.

### **3. Recommendation**

- 3.1 That Cabinet approves the Wyre Employment Land and Commercial Leisure Study (2012) as part of the evidence base for the emerging Wyre Local Plan and for Development Management purposes.

### **4. Background**

- 4.1 The planning system has undergone changes in relation to the production of planning policy documents through the introduction of the Localism Act, the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in March 2012 and the commencement of new local planning regulations. Prior to the publication of these, all Local Planning Authorities were required to prepare a Local Development Framework (LDF) containing a series of documents to provide the planning policy context for their area.

Wyre had made progress under these older arrangements by adopting an Area Action Plan for Fleetwood-Thornton and publishing a draft Core Strategy Preferred Options document.

- 4.2 One of the key implications of these national changes is that all Local Planning Authorities now need to decide how to produce planning documents in a situation of transition. Wyre intend to produce two separate local plans to cover the borough; the first of these being a strategic plan (the existing draft Core Strategy which will be renamed the Local Plan Strategy and Core Policies) and the second being a following Site Allocations and Development Management Policies document.
- 4.3 Each draft local plan needs to go through several stages of public consultation followed by independent examination by a government appointed inspector before it can be adopted by the council as planning policy. The inspector will consider whether the document is 'sound' with one aspect to this being whether the plan's strategy is justified, when considered against reasonable alternatives, based upon evidence. The emerging Local Plan Strategy and Core Policies will be supported by a wide range of evidence including the likes of a Sustainability Appraisal, Retail Study, Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and an Employment Land Study.
- 4.4 A Wyre Employment Land Study was produced by specialist consultants in 2008; however, it became apparent that an update of this became necessary due to changes in national advice and the need for a robust assessment which extended to the anticipated time period of the emerging Local Plan of 2029. Consequently, officers commissioned Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners to update the 2008 Study, whilst also addressing an existing gap in evidence relating to commercial leisure, and this work was completed in October 2012. The majority of the Study considers the need for employment allocations for business class uses (offices, light industry, general industry and warehousing) in the Local Plan.
- 4.5 If endorsed by Cabinet, the Employment Land and Commercial Study will form evidence for the emerging Local Plan and will also be used for Development Management purposes. This will be in terms of pre-application advice and as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. Reference to the Study may also be made by other officers looking to promote development opportunities and inward investment in Wyre.

## **5. Key Issues and Proposals**

- 5.1 The Employment Land and Commercial Leisure Study noted that there have been significant changes in the Wyre economy in recent years and that there will be further challenges from forthcoming public sector cuts and relocations. It also noted that past take up of employment land (business use class) has been relatively low, albeit that this excluded

uptake at the Lancashire Waste Technology Park at Thornton in 2010/11 as this was perceived to be exceptional. The main findings of the Study are as follows:

1. The advanced manufacturing/ engineering and environmental technologies sectors are identified as having good future growth potential in Wyre and the financial/ business services, information and communication technology, creative and media and leisure and tourism sectors are identified as having moderate growth potential.

2. Wyre's existing employment land portfolio of approximately 90 hectares including that remaining from the adopted Local Plan (1999) needs to be rebalanced. Put simply, this would entail removing some poorer quality allocations including those in areas of weak demand and replacing these with better sites in more attractive locations. The existing portfolio represents an oversupply to take forward in the new Local Plan and some sites should therefore be reallocated for other uses.

3. It is recommended that 45 hectares of employment land that would be available to the open market is required in Wyre to meet needs for business class uses over the period to 2029. The consultants put forward a portfolio of 29 existing employment land sites comprising some 40 hectares. A further 7 potential additional sites were assessed as possibilities to also include in the portfolio to make up the shortfall of around 5 hectares. Two were considered as being suitable to add to the portfolio of land that would be available on the open market.

4. The two new additional sites that could meet the shortfall are both located in the east of the borough, being land to the west of the A6 at Garstang and land south of Catterall Gates Lane. The Study considers both as being appropriate for mixed use including employment. In addition, a further new site is identified in this area for expansion land (see explanation below) as a potential south-eastern extension to Brockholes Way.

5. This recommended portfolio of 40 hectares, potentially rising to circa 45, includes land that would be available to the open market only. Identified in addition are sites for a) related employment uses (the port and for energy generation) and b) expansion land. The latter is land that is envisaged for the expansion needs of a specific business or businesses and would not therefore be available to the open market.

6. The inclusion of sites in the recommended employment land portfolio has been based upon a qualitative assessment using several criteria such as local road access and market attractiveness to 'score' each one. All matters being equal, those with higher scores have tended to be recommended for inclusion in the portfolio. They include sites at Hillhouse, around Copse Road at Fleetwood, the Poulton Industrial Estate and at Brockholes Way as well as Norcross which is recommended to be mostly allocated for mixed use with employment.

7. No specific allocations have been put forward in rural areas with it being recommended that rural needs are met through conversions of redundant buildings and other small scale developments.

8. The Study separately assessed a large number of employment areas that are currently in use (such as the Poulton Industrial Estate or Brockholes Way) and indicated that 26 of these should presently be retained in employment use.

9. With regard to commercial leisure facilities, given the current level of provision it is not considered that there are any specific shortages that need to be addressed in the emerging Local Plan.

5.2 Next Steps

Subject to Cabinet endorsement of the Wyre Employment Land and Commercial Leisure Study the intention would be to incorporate the Study's findings into the new Local Plan through the Local Plan Strategy and Core Policies document and then through appropriate site allocations in the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan. The drafting of these plans will require public consultation with Parish and Town Councils, residents and others. It would be advisable to update the Study periodically to ensure that the evidence base for producing Local Plans and considering planning applications against is kept up to date.

<b>IMPLICATIONS</b>	
Finance	The total cost of the Employment Land and Commercial Leisure Study was £30,985 with this being incurred in the 2012/13 financial year and for which budgetary provision was set aside.
Legal	The Study is part of the evidence base for the emerging Wyre Local Plan. Failure to have an up to date Study would be likely to result in the Local Plan being found unsound by the Planning Inspectorate. It would also be difficult to determine applications for development involving employment use or land or provide appropriate pre-application advice without this evidence.
Community Safety	There are no implications of this report.
Equality and Diversity	There are no immediate implications of this report; however the emerging Wyre Local Plan will be subject to equality impact assessment.
Sustainability	The emerging Wyre Local Plan is being prepared with reference to a separate, on going Sustainability Appraisal and should therefore build upon environmental and sustainability objectives relating to the future planning of the borough.
Health and Safety	There are no implications of this report.

Risk Management	Failure to provide a sound evidence base could result in the emerging Local Plan being found unsound by the Planning Inspectorate. Planning applications involving employment development (business use class) or land would be difficult to determine and, if refused, could be overturned on appeal without the correct evidence for decision making.
Asset Management	The Study makes recommendations regarding the allocation of future sites for employment use and the protection of a number of existing employment areas. The process of designating sites through the Local Plan Site Allocations and Development Management document could therefore affect the council's portfolio of assets.
Climate Change	See comments above regarding sustainability.

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<b>List of Background Papers:</b>		
Name of Document	Date	Where available for inspection
Wyre Employment Land and Commercial Leisure Study (Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners)	October 2012	Online at: <a href="http://www.wyre.gov.uk/info/200152/planning_policy/239/evidence_base/2">http://www.wyre.gov.uk/info/200152/planning_policy/239/evidence_base/2</a>
Wyre Employment Land Review (Genecon)	February 2008	Online at: <a href="http://www.wyre.gov.uk/downloads/file/253/employment_land_review-final_report">http://www.wyre.gov.uk/downloads/file/253/employment_land_review-final_report</a>

## **LIST OF APPENDICES**

None

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