

Frequently Asked Questions

How many new homes are recommended as being needed: is 13,000 or is it 14,000?

The total number of new homes recommended by the consultants is between 650 and 700 per year, ever year, from 2011 to 2031. This means that over a 20 year period between 13,000 and 14,000 new homes are required.

This consultation describes how around 5,000-6,000 homes could be developed on additional new sites in a hybrid option approach. Taken together, the known sites in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and the new strategic sites could provide the total recommended number of 13,000 to 14,000 homes.

Is the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) a local plan?

No, the SHLAA is evidence that informs the local plan. The council needs to know how many sites are available for development. The sites that the council already knows about are shown in the SHLAA. Planning officers have assessed whether these sites are deliverable, in other words they have considered if the sites are **suitable** for development, if they are **available** for development, and if development of the site is **achievable**. The assessment is made at a point in time, the outcome of the assessment may change from year to year as information changes.

This is a lot of jobs and homes, can the council not plan for smaller numbers?

Government guidance is very clear on this matter. Councils must plan in accordance with the evidence regarding their housing and employment needs. Local plans should meet the recommended need, and have flexibility, unless there are very clear negative planning impacts. Councils will have to produce hard and convincing evidence of why they can't meet their own needs. Only high level and serious planning impacts would justify taking such a position.

What is the council doing about empty homes, could these not provide homes instead of building new homes?

The council appointed an empty homes officer in 2013. In the first year, the empty homes officer helped bring 67 properties back into use. The council adopted its first Empty Homes Strategy in October 2014, has extended the officer post for a further two years and has set aside a significant dedicated budget to spend on tackling empty homes. The council is also working in partnership with Methodist Action North West who lease empty properties and offer financial assistance to owners to bring their empty homes back into use. This helps to increase the amount of good quality homes to meet the great demand for rented accommodation. The reduced number of empty homes is taken into account in the calculations for future housing need.

Last year the council was suggesting that a new town in the Lune Valley might be developed, has this idea not be continued?

The new town was one of five options suggested in 2014, but it did not compare well with the other approaches. The council is no longer exploring the option of developing a new town.

Is this consultation saying that we need an urban extension at Lancaster or sites in the greenbelt or growth at Dolphinholme?

No, the consultation is saying that we need development at all three of these locations.

Is development of green belt allowed by law?

Green belts are protected by policy, not by legislation. The North Lancashire Green Belt is designated through the local plan. Councils are being advised to review their green belts when updating their local plan to ensure that they are still functioning as green belt, and if its current boundaries are still relevant for now and the future.

Why does the consultation show sites in the green belt when the green belt has not been reviewed yet?

The council is preparing the local plan as quickly as it can to ensure that it can meet the Government's timetable. It is possible that the green belt review might conclude that some or all of the suggested sites in the green belt should not be allocated in the local plan, alternatively the boundaries of the green belt may need to be changed because the sites identified here are the best available for accommodating growth. Sites to be allocated will be shown in the draft local plan that will be consulted on in 2016.

Could all of this development happen in just the next few years?

The local plan needs to phase development over the next fifteen years. The strategic sites suggestions will all require a great deal of work before they can be developed, this will take some time. New infrastructure may need to be planned and delivered. The sites would be developed gradually over a long period of time. Housing developers usually build about 30-40 houses per year on a big site, so a site of 400 houses might take 10 years to complete.

Development of these sites suggest lots of questions that are not answered here, is there more detail?

All of these sites require much more work and much more discussion with community representatives, service providers, land owners, potential developers, and agencies that build and manage infrastructure such as Lancashire County Council and the Highways Agency. This work will continue as the council prepares its draft local plan. The council wishes to engage with the community at this stage so that people can see the evidence and recommendations and what sites are likely to come through the local plan process.

When a site is identified in the local plan does the council decide who builds the homes?

No, the council's role is to ensure that enough opportunities for new homes to be built are shown in the local plan. Homes will be built by developers, for example; Story Homes, Barratt Homes, Miller Homes and Russell Armer Homes. The developers would need to buy the land from the current owners. They would also need to get detailed planning permission. Housing Associations, such as Adactus and the Guinness Partnership, will build, or buy, and then manage affordable homes. The council has planning policies in place to make sure that a good proportion of all the new homes built are affordable homes.